

The Pursuit of Wealth

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Be careful what you wish for; you might just get it. Or to use the language of contemporary self-help; you will get the thing on which you most actively focus.

It may be a bumper sticker joke to “visualize whirled peas”, but there is a lot of truth in the underlying principle. Visualization and proclamation are powerful tools for manipulating the natural and supernatural world. Practitioners of magic and creative reality understand how to project energy into the cosmic consciousness in ways that can alter circumstance, although they are hard-pressed to explain how it actually works. The methods and practices have been documented extensively by witchcraft and new age practitioners along with independent researchers like Jose Silva.

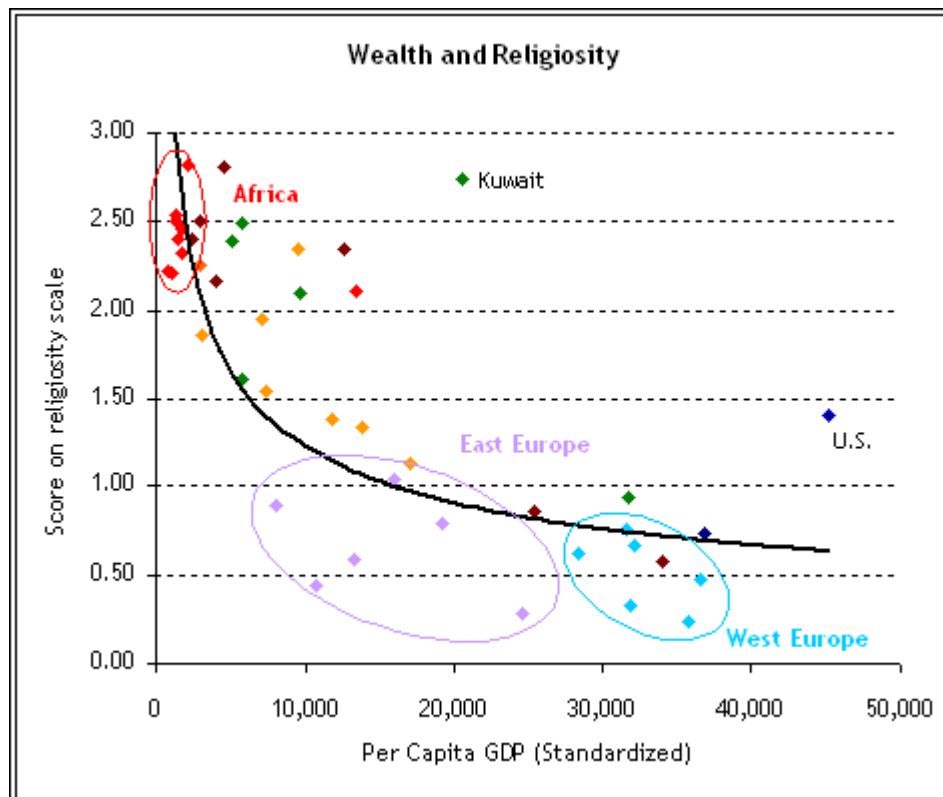
One of the most common uses of creative reality techniques is generating wealth (Aramaic = “mammon”). It is one of the most basic of human desires, along with love and physical health. Wealth buys comfort, leisure time, protection, influence over others, and personal satisfaction. The author Napoleon Hill wrote the definitive adaptation of creative reality techniques to the generation of wealth in a series of books that began with “Think and Grow Rich”. He found that most of the dominant capitalists of the late 1800s and early 1900s applied these techniques in their personal lives. Each had a passionate and single-minded drive for personal success that seemingly attracted the environment for that success.

People of faith typically wrestle with one of two things where wealth is concerned; whether accumulating it is consistent with living a God-fearing lifestyle, and the degree to which energy should be directed to its pursuit independent of the “will of God”. If it is well-established that we attract that on which we focus, then it is also a truism that seeking wealth takes energy away from seeking God. It is also clear that very few of those recognized as spiritual greats throughout history had much in the way of financial resources. It appears that faith in a sovereign God is strengthened through natural weakness and dependency.

The purpose of this paper is to contrast the “Bible-believing” lifestyle from that which is dedicated to the generation of wealth. There are clear distinctions to be made.

Worldly Wealth

At a macro level, the attitudes of society toward religion and wealth show a surprisingly consistent relationship. The chart below was published as part of the *Pew Global Attitudes Project*. It plots a religiosity score against per capita GDP, where religiosity is based on a 3-question index. Survey respondents in each nation were given one point each if they 1) believe faith in God is necessary for morality; 2) say religion is very important in their lives; and 3) pray at least once a day.



There are two ways to interpret the graph. Either a faith in God creates poverty, or circumstances of poverty incline people toward God. The causality could go either way, but neither suggests that God lavishes wealth on those who follow him. It is more likely that focusing one's energies on the generation of money as an end in itself produces more wealth than focusing on serving God and other people. In the industrialized countries having an orientation to commerce, it does appear that you get the thing on which you most actively focus.

The table on the following page compares a "Biblical" worldview about wealth with that documented by Napoleon Hill in his books about success. The two column headings have been selected to reflect the essence of the difference. The first represents a life of conscious submission to the will of God as lauded in the Bible. The second seeks wealth through use of mystical practices that generally fall in the domain of magic. Magic is defined as "a conceptual system that asserts human ability to control the natural world (including events, objects, people, and physical phenomena) through mystical, paranormal or supernatural means." [Wikipedia] Certainly, creative visualization techniques that conjure or attract wealth fall in this category.

The various categories loosely group the thoughts and quotes. It is interesting how polar the statements are.

Submission to God includes seeking and doing his will, and being satisfied with such daily gifts of success and wealth as God chooses to give.

Magical practices aim to bend the universe to the service of the practitioner, including inducing the cooperation of other people. The language used by Napoleon Hill is clear that pursuit of wealth requires a single-minded, obsessive devotion that borders on the Machiavellian. It is easy to understand how such obsession can be destructive since its all-consuming nature does not encourage satisfaction at any level of financial gain.

Godly Wealth

Living a submitted life before God requires a conscious choice on our part to ask God's permission regarding the desires of our heart. His word says these desires will not be denied if requested with right motive – that is, for use in furthering God's Kingdom. He wants to give his people good gifts, but only if the gift will not turn those very people away from him. It is certainly possible that God will say "no", and important that we accept that answer – whether for a season or as a way of life.

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. [1 John 3:21-22]

God covenanted repeatedly with the Hebrews that they would live abundant lives in the land where they settled if they remained faithful to his commandments.

Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine. [Proverbs 3:9-10]

But living in safety with daily needs met is not the same as accumulating great wealth for future use and to create a self-sufficiency that no longer depends on God.

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." [Luke 12:16-21]

The person of Godly character is not attached to wealth, and is prepared at God's instruction to joyfully release it at any time for Kingdom purposes. These are the ones that it is God's preference to gift financially. They never see their money as their own; they are just banking it for a time until God is ready to direct its use.

He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. [Luke 16:10]

God wants us to depend on him daily so we do not forget him. The following prayer should be our guidepost.

"...give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God." [Proverbs 30:8-9]

Comparison of Biblical and Magical Worldviews Regarding Wealth and Wealth Generation

	Submission to God	Magical Practices
Philosophy	God is there to be served	Universal Intelligence is there to serve you
	The blessings to be given in this life and the next are up to God.	Riches do not respond to wishes. They respond only to definite plans, backed by definite desires, through constant persistence.
Method	But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. [Matthew 6:33]	Anything the human mind can believe, the human mind can achieve. Believe in poverty and you will be poor. Believe in wealth and you will be rich. Believe in love and you will have love. Believe in health and you will be healthy.
	Listen to God and do what he says.	The method by which one may contact Infinite Intelligence through the means of the subconscious mind is simple; it consists in the repetition of a thought, desire, or purpose, by bringing it into the conscious mind often and expressing it orally, in a state of high emotional feeling, thus enabling the subconscious mind to act upon it intelligently.
	Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. [Philippians 4:8]	Any idea that is held in the mind, emphasized, feared, or revered, begins at once to clothe itself in the most convenient and appropriate physical form that is available.
	But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.	
Focus	No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. [Luke 16:13]	You might as well know, right here, that you can never have riches in great quantities unless you can work yourself into a white heat of desire for money, and actually believe you will possess it.
	Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [Matthew 6:19-21]	Make up your mind what you desire of life, decide to get just that, without substitutes, and lo! You will have taken possession of one of the most priceless of all assets available to human beings. But your desire must be no mere wish or hope! It must be a burning desire, and it must become so definitely an obsessional desire that you are willing to pay whatever price its attainment may cost.
	Give us each day our daily bread. [Luke 11:3]	When you give directives to your subconscious mind, be definite, and clearly state your desires, and you will not be disappointed, provided you emotionalize your directives with strong belief that they will be carried out. By this procedure the power which operates the Universe will be at your disposal!

	Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction." But they did not listen to Moses, and some left part of it until morning [stored it for the future], and it bred worms and became foul; and Moses was angry with them. [Exodus 16:4,20]	
	'You shall have no other gods before Me. 'You shall not make for yourself an idol, {or} any likeness {of} what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. 'You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God.' [Deuteronomy 5:7-9]	
Belief	But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. [James 1:5-8]	You may influence, direct, and eventually control your own environment, making your life what you want it to be - or, you may neglect to exercise the privilege which is yours, to make your life to order, thus casting yourself upon the broad sea of "circumstance" where you will be tossed hither and yon, like a ship on the waves of the ocean.
	Then he [Abram] believed in the LORD; and He [God] reckoned it to him as righteousness. [Genesis 15:6]	There is a difference between wishing for a thing and being ready to receive it. No one is ready for a thing until he believes he can acquire it. The state of mind must be belief, not mere hope or wish.
Character	But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; Avoid such men as these. [2 Timothy 3:1-5]	I fully realize that no wealth or position can long endure unless built upon truth and justice; therefore, I will engage in no transaction which does not benefit all whom it affects. I will succeed by attracting to myself the forces I wish to use, and the cooperation of other people. I will induce others to serve me, because of my willingness to serve others. I will eliminate hatred, envy, jealousy, selfishness, and cynicism, by developing love for all humanity, because I know that a negative attitude toward others can never bring me success. I will cause others to believe in me, because I will believe in them and in myself.