

MONEY

A Planned Life (Millard Fuller)

Millard Fuller was a millionaire who had everything that money could buy, but he was not happy. His wife had just left him, and in his misery he remembered an old Chinese proverb: "A planned life can only be endured."

Millard realized that he was living a planned life. His plan involved more and more money, a bigger and bigger business, more and more things, and finally a prominent place in the cemetery. His life now, however, was more than he could endure.

While the words of this haunting philosophy were still ringing in his ears he phoned his estranged wife in New York and persuaded her to let him come and visit. The agony of their souls was transformed into the ecstasy of Christian commitment. They determined to abandon their plans for worldly goals and seek first the kingdom of God. Joyously they stayed up all night long, praying, and talking, and singing: "We're Marching to Zion." That tune absolutely filled their hearts and souls. Three days later,

Millard said, they were cheerfully ignoring the stares of their fellow passengers on a flight back to Montgomery, still singing: "We're Marching to Zion."

Now, in a very real sense, they were attempting to let God plan their lives. They were off on a great adventure with God.

They hailed a cab, and the first cab stopped. Millard said jokingly, that was a miracle in and of itself. The driver turned around and said: "Congratulations! This is a brand new cab and you are my first passengers." They drove around in Central Park and shared with him their new direction in life. The driver was a Christian, and they felt encouraged after their conversation, that they had made the right decision.

On the way back home Millard spoke to a young African named Daniel Offiong. He had just arrived from Nigeria. When they discovered how little money he had they wrote him a check for \$50. He began to weep. He was a Christian man and related that just the day before in Africa, his pastor had predicted that he would meet a Good Samaritan in America who would help him. The great adventure had just begun, but it was exciting.

Daniel had a brilliant college career here in the States, eventually receiving his doctoral degree. A "Daniel Offiong Scholarship Fund" still exists in his name at the Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi.

I suppose there is nothing wrong with making plans for our lives, provided we always remain flexible and open to the leading of God. Life abundant is not endured, it is enjoyed, and Millard and his family were discovering this joy on a daily basis. God's leading was keeping them on the cutting edge.

Ultimately they went to Africa as missionaries for three years. When Millard phoned Dr. Robert Nelson to inquire about this possibility he said: "Millard, your call is providential. If you had called two days ago I would have said No, but only yesterday a representative of the Zaire church was in my office asking for someone to help. . . ." Touché! God had done it again.

Today Millard is at the head of Habitat for Humanity which

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will complete a thousand new homes this year for the poor throughout the world. He still has a planned life, but God does the planning!

Billion Dollar Blessings?

(J. Paul Getty)

J. Paul Getty was a billionaire who was regarded as America's richest man. The blessings of his billions provide us with a keen insight into the Scriptures which warn, "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and hurtful lusts."

One blessing which one might expect from a billion dollars would be a strong sense of security. Not so! Getty's mansion was surrounded by vicious Alsatian dogs, all 500 windows were barred, and his bedside table was equipped with five policeman's truncheons. This, however, did not make him feel secure. Later he would have his bedroom door embedded with a steel sheet and hire a guard to stand watch beside it all night long with an attack dog.

Well, a billion dollars would surely make your wife happy. Wrong again! Getty was married five times and reportedly was visited by an assortment of female friends whom he would write into and out of his will as the whims would strike him. None of his marriages seemed to be happy ones.

Well, all that money would at least enable you to take care of your children in a proper way. Getty had five sons by four of his wives, but did not seem close to any of them. When his son Timmy died of a brain tumor in 1958 he did not even attend the funeral. Once his son George arrived for a regular business consultation with his father and was kept waiting eight days for an audience. A week before George committed suicide he wrote to his mother saying he "would see her in the hereafter and happier life." His son Paul Jr. was disinherited for his use of drugs and his father never saw him again. When Getty died in 1976 various factions in the family struggling for control of the fortune forced the sale of Getty Oil to Texaco. Unfortunately, his money did not buy him a happy family.

Certainly a man with all that money would have time to spend with his parents. Getty, however, did not seem close to his parents. He never introduced his girlfriends to them and neither of his parents was invited to any of his five weddings. When his father died he battled his mother over control of the estate.

What about grandchildren? No . . . he didn't seem close to them either. His grandson, J. Paul III, once wrote: "I am a refugee from a Rolls-Royce . . . I am an escapee from the credit card." When the boy was kidnapped his grandfather suspected him of framing the whole thing himself to extort money and, therefore, refused to pay the ransom until the kidnappers cut off the victim's ear and mailed it to the police. That boy later became blind, paralyzed, and unable to speak clearly as a result of drugs and alcohol abuse.

You would assume that a man with all that money would surely be generous with somebody. In this regard biographer Robert Lenzner wrote: "His parsimoniousness was pathological. He would rarely buy anything — from a company to a work of art for his Malibu museum — unless he felt he was getting a bargain. His public image was symbolized by the pay telephone in his house. Although he loved making money, he never felt rich, and he was afraid everyone was after him for his money (he was right) . . . America's richest man was even stingier with love than he was with money. . . ."

Many of J. Paul Getty's "blessing of billions" seem to be things which most of us would rather do without.

If today, however, we had the chance to be a billionaire we would jump at the opportunity fully confident that things would be different with us than they were with J. Paul Getty. In this regard the poet has well said: "It's not what you'd do with billions, if riches should ere be your lot, it's what you're doing right now with the dollar and a half that you've got."

Condensed from *The Getty Legacy*
by Robert Lenzner
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Casting Away His Garments **(Bartimaeus – Mark 10:50)**

The city of Jericho is located in the Jordan Valley approximately 1,300 feet below sea level. It is called the “city of palm trees” (Jdgs. 3:13), and its very name means “fragrant.” The strategic location of this city made it a primary military target in the days of Joshua and also a city of great commercial significance in the days of Jesus. As the port of entry for southern Palestine it became a focal point for travelers from many parts of the world.

Along this busy highway sat a blind beggar whose name was Bartimaeus. I see him in my mind's eye with disheveled clothing and an outstretched hand . . . his face a symbol of despair. In the chamber of my imagination I hear his mournful mutter amidst the shuffle of passing feet. This lonely beggar is now the object of international attention and eternal fame. He speaks to us from the pedestal of Holy Scripture with the eloquence of an insuppressible faith.

The story of his encounter with Christ is all but too beautiful for words. The few brief sentences about him in the Bible excite our imagination and fill our hearts with wonder. At the very thought of Jesus within the sound of his voice he erupted with a volley of unrestrainable cries for compassion. He refused to be intimidated and when others charged him to hold his peace he cried the more a great deal . . . “JESUS, THOU SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY ON ME.”

When Jesus stopped and called for him the scripture chronicle this penetrating statement of fact, “And he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus.

While none of us may ever grasp the full significance of this event, let me remind you that beggars in many parts of the world are doomed to live in the streets. The only property they own is carried on their person and anything which they abandon is

usually gone forever. Especially would this be true of the blind.

The word translated here as "garment" is the Greek word *himation* — the corresponding Hebrew word is *simlah*. It refers to the outer garment which comprised a poor man's protection from the elements. For this reason a man who received this raiment as a pledge could not keep it beyond sundown. With reference to the poor man's garment the Bible states ". . . it is his covering only, it is his raiment for his skin; wherein shall he sleep?" (Exod. 22:27).

The recognition of this important detail adds a new dimension to the behaviour of Bartimaeus. It deepens our conviction that he had thrown caution to the wind and more accurately delineates his "all or nothing plunge" into the presence of Jesus. He threw aside his garment . . . how beautiful. His most treasured possession made insignificant by the presence of Deity. The one thing he had clutched at more tightly than any other now thrown down like so much trash that he might gain Christ. His garment must have been as important to his emotional security as prestige was to Paul, or as a fishing business was to the apostles, or as Isaac was to Abraham — but in an instant of time he cast it aside stumbling in the darkness toward the voice of Jesus. No turning back . . . no whining . . . no regrets . . . no groveling in the dust to recover his cloak before someone snatched it away.

I like to think that Bartimaeus didn't even need that cloak again. With eyes to see he would be liberated from the gutters of life. He no longer needed the scraps and rags thrown away by society — he now could work and buy things new.

It is worthy of our remembrance that Jesus never passed that way again. If Bartimaeus had waited for a more convenient season he would have waited in vain. If he had foolishly thought more of his rags than of Christ's riches he would have finished his life in poverty . . . but he gave up things he could not keep to gain the things that he could not lose . . . He cast away his garments.

The Story of a Slave

(Hetty Green)

Ragged clothes . . . never enough to eat . . . virtually no medical attention . . . poor sleeping quarters . . . little or no time for recreation or rest . . . no time for family . . . driven relentlessly by a cruel master . . . enslaved.

To whom do I refer? As strange as it might seem I speak of Hetty Green, who died in 1916, the richest and most detested female in America.

Arthur H. Lewis tells the strange story of her life and fortune in the fascinating book *The Day They Shook the Plum Tree*, (Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., N.Y.). Many of you have read with anger the tragic story of Uncle Tom . . . flogged to death by the wicked Simon Legree. A similar emotion is experienced when you read of a woman with a \$100,000,000 in the bank eating crackers and cold oatmeal because she was too cheap to buy good food. You stare with disbelief at the page which reveals that she lived the last 20 years of her life with a painful hernia because she would not spend the \$150 for an operation. She attempted to relieve the pain by placing a stick over the hernia and binding it to her body with rags. Your face may flush with anger when you discover that her own son's leg had to be amputated because she was too cheap to take him to a doctor. She tried for several days to get free medical attention but each doctor she went to for help recognized her as a millionaire and refused to treat the boy for nothing. When she was at last reconciled to paying a doctor she went to her neighborhood physician and was told the boy's leg would have to be amputated above the knee.

What forces created this woman who with millions of dollars in the bank, would search half of the night for a lost 2-cent postage stamp? What incredible quirk of nature brought into existence this creature who would forge the signature of her deceased Aunt Sylvia in a vain attempt to accumulate a million

dollars more? She was caught in the attempt and had to flee to England to avoid prosecution. What inspired her to cheat her employees and even to withhold payment from her attorneys until they had to take her to court to receive their fees? Whatever it was that made a Hetty Green was as damnable and Satanic as any crime ever committed.

The fabulous fortune of the Green family began with one black cow bought in Plymouth, Mass., in 1624. The fortune grew slowly through the prolific and frugal family of Hetty Green to a six million dollar estate which she inherited upon the death of her father. Her father, Edward "Black Hawk" Robinson, sat her upon his knee and read to her the business news and stock market reports when she was only five years old . . . she claimed to have read them by herself when she was six. Brainwashed as a baby with the mercenary philosophy of her father she grew into a ruthless financial tyrant who found it easier to make a million dollars than to take a bath. When she died the fortune that enslaved her continued as a ball and chain plague to her playboy son and screwball daughter.

The one legged son "Col. Ned" (6'4" and 300 lbs.), spent \$3,000,000 a year on "yachts, coins, stamps, diamond-studded chastity belts, female teenage 'wards,' pornography, orchid culture, and Texas politics."

Her daughter, Sylvia, kept \$31,000,000 in a bank that paid no interest. Dan Chicko, a hard working Italian laborer, served as her gardener for thirty-four years. During this time Sylvia spoke to him but twice. Once to tell him that he would be docked an hour's pay (40 cents) because he was late for work . . . the other time to tell him to keep his daughter off the premises . . . she didn't like children. She had but one bookkeeper to keep track of her millions. He was hired in 1915 and reached his peak pay in 1945 when his wages were increased to \$75 a week. He sat like Scrooge's Bob Cratchet on a high stool in a dismal room overlooking a cemetery. He labored long into the night keeping track of the millions that hung like the proverbial millstone about

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the Green family, drowning them in destruction and perdition.

They're all dead now. The plum tree has been shaken . . . the harvest lies rotting on the ground. Almost without exception these millions were distributed where they were least needed and where they accomplished a minimum of good. Such is the sad story of a slave and her descendants.

Him That Needeth

(Dr. Tony Campolo)

Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth (Eph. 5:28).

This Scripture literally came alive to me the other day as I was conducting a radio interview with Dr. Tony Campolo. Dr. Campolo is the Head of the Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology at Eastern College, and an out-spoken critic of the American life style as it relates to the problems of world hunger.

When I heard Dr. Campolo speak for the first time several years ago, I was impressed by his challenge to have compassion on those with bloated bellies and bare feet in those nations of the third world. I responded, however, not by giving, but by asking the question, "I wonder what kind of a life style Tony Campolo has . . . ?"

Such thinking, of course, is more psychological than it is logical. In reality Campolo's life style has absolutely nothing to do with the plight of people in the Third World, or with my responsibility to God to do something about it. Nevertheless, the nagging curiosity was ever present in my mind.

Nor was I alone in such thinking. At virtually every session where questions were permitted, others would verbalize my own suspicions. "We may not be doing anything to help the poor," but "What are you doing, Dr. Campolo?" As though by some mental magic we could be absolved from our guilt by picking at a flaw in his character.

Each answer which he would give to these pointed questions always left some doubt in my mind, however, regarding his consistency. For example, somebody might ask, "What are you doing to help the poor?" To which he might respond something like this, "Well, I have a few things going but the point is that I, too, have been seduced by the whore of affluence. I, too, am addicted

to the American life style."

I longed for the opportunity to get him eyeball to eyeball to know more of this man whose abrasive reminders about world poverty had put a burr under my blanket.

At last my opportunity came. It was Thursday, January 21, 1982. He had promised me an interview but before the interview I was privileged to be in a small group that had lunch with him.

The man across the table commented, "You know, I made \$47,000 last year and it really doesn't mean much of anything to me." "Yea," Tony responded, "I guess I made over \$80,000 and I feel the same way."

This guy had talked about an income of 80 grand as nonchalantly as I would talk about a piece of used furniture that I was about to burn or donate to the Salvation Army.

He then continued that he and a small group of friends had committed themselves to living on only a fraction of their incomes and giving the rest away. They computed that a family of four should be able to survive adequately on an income of \$14,000-\$15,000 each year.

"Would you be willing to talk about this on the radio?" I asked. With some reservations he agreed.

The Campolo family makes something like \$80,000 to \$90,000 each year and yet lives on only about \$14,000. Tony drives a 1965 automobile, has a black and white TV which he paid \$98 for a number of years ago, and clothes his family to a large degree at thrift shops with second-hand apparel. He even shares a lawn mower with four other families.

Yet, he did not seem proud of this at all. As a matter of fact, he seemed a bit embarrassed to talk about it, for he still considers that he has far too much to accurately model to the world the life style of Jesus.

He and his four companions contribute something like a quarter of a million dollars each year to help alleviate the problems of world poverty and starvation. Their efforts are directed principally to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, though they

have helped some also in Africa.

He gives a great deal of credit to his children for their willingness to sacrifice. A few months ago they were with him in Haiti to witness the dedication of an orphanage which they had helped to finance. The Campolo children didn't have all the clothing and toys which others in their neighborhood may have enjoyed, but it seems that they had something far better. They had the joy of seeing literally hundreds of little children glow with appreciation and love for what may have literally been the gift of life.

Then Tony said, "You know my son is now a college student, and he said to me the other day, 'Dad, I want to get a job so that I can make a whole lot of money and then give it away to people like this.' "

That's when the passage in Ephesians popped into my mind. How utterly beautiful! We are to labor and be diligent, not to purchase bigger homes and newer cars, but to give to those in need. The Biblical imptus to labor does not revolve around our bourgeois tendencies toward personal luxury and ease, but rather it should personify the selflessness of Christ in reaching out to help others. The Scriptures teach that we are to labor . . . so that we may give to those in need!

Tony Campolo is a sinner. He is not 100 percent consistent. He will never be saved on the basis of his works. Yet I found in him a measure of consistency which is both challenging and humbling. He is absolutely sincere in his efforts to be a good Samaritan and his voice will choke with emotion when he talks of those who will go to bed this night without a crust of bread or a bowl of rice.

What About Paul?

It is altogether possible that someone will want to pursue the matter a bit further and probe into the life style of Paul. He presented a great challenge to his brethren at Ephesus . . . but was he willing to make the same type of sacrifice which he

demanded of them? Would he bind upon them a burden which he would not touch with one of his fingers?

We have every reason to believe that Paul too was much in need of grace. He described himself as the chief of sinners and declared his intentions to throw every vestige of self righteousness upon the garbage heap where it belongs. Yet, there are a number of indications that Paul did manifest a generous spirit and a measure of consistency toward those who were in physical need.

Interestingly, enough, at least one reference to his generosity comes in direct association with the church at Ephesus. Paul was on his way to Jerusalem when he stopped by at Miletus and sent for the elders of the Ephesian church. When they arrived he reminisced about his years in Ephesus and reminded them:

I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:33-35).

It seems obvious that Paul was an entrepreneur of some magnitude. Not only did his business enterprise provide for personal support but he specifically claimed to also support those that were with him.

We should not be surprised, of course, to discover that Paul would make tents in a big way. He did everything in a big way. He even persecuted Christians in a big way. He secured letters of authority from the High Priest and searched strange cities for any who would confess the Christ. He was even on his way to Damascus at the time of his dramatic conversion.

His evangelistic efforts in behalf of Christ were even more spectacular than his efforts to oppose Him. In ten short years he and his team of co-laborers fully preached the gospel from Jerusalem all the way to Illyricum (Rom. 15:19).

A few sentences later in the Roman letter he was sending greetings to some twenty-six co-laborers whom he knew by name in Rome. This, in spite of the fact that he had never been to Rome. It is altogether possible that these individuals represented part of an evangelistic team whom Paul had sent ahead to prepare for a great harvest of souls (see Rom. 16).

As I have said, it is logical to assume that the Pharisee who advanced beyond those of his own age in the Jews religion (Gal. 1:14), and who labored more abundantly than the other apostles in Christianity (I Cor. 15:10) would plunge into tent making with the same reckless abandon that he did everything else. This enabled him, not only to support himself, but also them that were with him (Acts. 20:34).

It is my personal conviction that Paul was a man who continually had access to considerable wealth. As a young man this would help to account for his education. As an Apostle of Christ it would help to explain why a wealthy Governor like Felix would hope to get money from him (Acts 24:26). As a prisoner who had been unable to work for several years it would help to explain how he was able to spend two years in Rome in "his own hired house" (Acts 28:30).

Now prepare yourself for a great paradox. The period of time when Paul was in Ephesus "supporting the weak" was precisely the same time when he wrote the first Corinthian letter.

In this letter written from Ephesus, he referred to his humble circumstances and wrote:

Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labour working with our hands . . ." (I Cor. 4:11-12).

At the very time he was supporting others, he was being treated like the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things.

His reference to supporting the weak as Jesus taught is particularly significant. The word translated as "weak" is *astheneo*

which literally means to be without strength. It is variously translated in the Authorized Version as "be diseased, be made weak, be sick, be weak, impotent man, impotent, sick, and weak."

Now let us review this information for the sake of emphasis. Paul writes a letter to the Ephesians telling them not to steal, but rather to labor with their hands doing something good, in order that they might have something to give to those in need. A few years earlier he had told the elders of the Ephesian Church the same thing when he met them face to face at Miletus. He reminded them that Jesus was interested in the "weak" and that he had followed the example of Christ while he labored there. From his remarks in I Corinthians 4 we know that Paul was experiencing personal hardship, at the very time he was laboring to help the "weak" and also to support those who labored with him.

So we see a measure of consistency in Campolo . . . and a measure of consistency in Paul . . . but we see perfect consistency in Christ. He who owned every beast of the forest and the cattle upon a thousand hills was content to travel through this world without lusting for any physical things. The birds had nests and the foxes had holes but Jesus had no place to lay his head. At the time of His death, His corpse was even placed in a borrowed tomb.

As I make my pilgrimage from the selfishness of sin to the selflessness of Christ, a milestone of progress will be achieved when I learn to labor for the right reason, i.e., for the purpose of giving to those in need.