

How to balance providing for one's family and charity?



Like most things, it's not the outward actions and situation that matter most, it's our inner state.

So just as with fasting from food, it's not the literal, physical act of abstaining from meat that is somehow really important to God. It's an outward act we do to help reshape our hearts closer to their original design. The goal isn't to not eat certain foods, the goal is to master our passions and turn toward God.

Similarly with money, the goal isn't to cure homelessness and make sure everyone on Earth has an equal amount of wealth or everyone has access to the same amount of services. The goal is to humble ourselves, to detach ourselves from the worldly goods that control us, and to become loving and giving to others as God is to us.

The young rich man thought he was Godly, he upheld all the commandments from his youth. But when he was told to give away his wealth, he turned back. Christ

showed that he hadn't truly turned to God because there was this thing, wealth, that he loved more, that ruled him and controlled him. He chose his wealth over God.

It doesn't seem like Christ was using that as an opportunity to say, everyone, by rule, must renounce all wealth. It was a message for that young man, to point out the thing that he needed to give up because it was the thing that he valued more than God.

So bringing it back to our subject: It's about our relationship with wealth. Does it control us? Do we worship it and value it more than God? Basically, if God asked you to give it all up tomorrow would you? If you would, then wealth is no hindrance. And that person, because they obviously have their priorities straight, is going to use that wealth in a way that is pleasing to God. They're going to give the firstfruits to the Church. They're going to help the poor. They're not going to lavishly waste or flaunt or hoard that wealth for their own glorification.

Two monks at the gate of Vatopedi Monastery, Mount Athos

— Source: asceticexperience.com