



Richard Everett, a registered rep and a minister in Connecticut, practices what he preaches. He makes a "profit" on what God owns.

Despite the familiar expression, money is *not* the root of all evil, according to Richard Everett, a financial planner and registered rep in North Haven, Conn.

"That's one of the most misquoted verses in Scripture," says Everett, after apologizing for preaching over the telephone. "Actually, it's the love of money that's the root of all evil."

It's understandable that Everett knows the correct biblical reference. He's been an ordained minister since 1983. In fact, his rocky relationship with money over the years makes him uniquely qualified as a financial planner and minister.

In 1984, one year after receiving his ministry degree from Berean School of the Bible in Springfield, Mo., a recession gripped the country and Everett lost his first job as a preacher. A year earlier, Everett sold his wholesale business to pursue the ministry.

"When I lost the position at the church, I ended up with absolutely

nothing," Everett says. With a mortgage to pay and two young children, he "humored" some colleagues who suggested a career in financial services.

"You gotta admit, God must have a sense of humor to take somebody with no job, no savings and a quarter of a million in debt and put them in the financial planning business," Everett says.

Over time, Everett paid off that \$250,000. He worked for an insurance firm before forming his own company, Everett Financial, in 1988.

Today, Everett's financial situation is drastically improved. He has about 1,200 clients, \$100 million in assets under management and gross commissions of more than \$1 million annually.

So Everett's time in the pulpit these days is limited to about four or five guest sermons a year. As he visits churches throughout Connecticut and the Northeast, Everett shares a special message about wealth,

Balancing God's Checkbook

based on his own experience and his knowledge of Scripture.

"God is the owner. We have been entrusted to manage it, and to make a profit on what he has given us," Everett once told a congregation during a Sunday morning sermon.

More specifically, Everett has outlined 10 "stewardship principles" regarding money, taken from Proverbs:

- 1) The wise man saves for the future, but the foolish man spends whatever he gets.
- 2) Don't withhold payment of your debts.
- 3) It is poor judgment to countersign another's notes, to be responsible for his debts.
- 4) Just as the rich rule the poor, so the borrower is servant to the lender.
- 5) Any enterprise is built by wise planning, becomes strong through common sense and profits wonderfully by keeping abreast of the facts.
- 6) The Lord despises every kind of cheating.
- 7) Lazy men are soon poor, hard workers get rich.
- 8) A good reputation is worth more than silver or gold.
- 9) You are a poor specimen if you can't stand the pressure of adversity.
- 10) A prudent man foresees the difficulties ahead and prepares for them. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.

"The bottom line here is that you can indeed serve God and money as long as your priorities are straight," Everett says. And his priorities are apparently straight. "My wife and I give almost \$250,000 a year away, so I don't necessarily do financial planning for the money," he says.

Everett indeed practices what he preaches. —**Michael Hayes**