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RIGHT ON THE MONEY



Starting late next year, the money in your wallet will last a lot longer, at least in one respect.

At the end of 2011, Canada will introduce a new series of bills printed on a polymer material, a smooth, ultra-thin, lightweight


film. The new currency, complete with sophisticated security features, will be much more durable than paper money, cheaper to make, and better for the environment. As the polymer series is phased in and older bills are removed, paper money will gradually disappear.

That will be just the latest shift in a long evolution that began in the late 1600s. At that time, a coin shortage prompted authorities to accept playing cards as Canada's first official paper money, provided they were marked with a value and proper signature. At about the same time, beaver pelts were also used for commercial exchanges.

Many other objects were used as legal tender over the years, with everything depending on value and availability. Europeans used native shell beads as money, the Haida people exchanged large copper shields which were a symbol of wealth, and coins from all around the globe were accepted across Canada in the 18th century, with their value often determined by how much gold or silver they were made of.

During the War of 1812, the army printed notes to pay soldiers and buy supplies, which helped build trust in paper money. Five years later, the Bank of Montreal issued the first true paper currency and other banks followed. It wasn't until 1935 that the Bank of Canada started issuing notes in denominations from \$1 to \$1,000 and soon became the sole supplier of this country's money.

Those first notes was mostly flax and later bills were made from wood pulp which, in the mid-1980s, were replaced by cotton paper. Today, about \$51 billion worth of paper money is in circulation.



*The Bible gives
Christians just
two choices:
Buy in, or sell out!*

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In all of it, security features are built in. There's a watermark (a faint design that's visible when held to the light) and a woven security thread that looks like metallic dashes on the back of the notes. On the front there's another colour-shifting metallic stripe, and these measures work. In 2009, the number of phoney bills passed in Canada plunged by 88 per cent, compared to 2004, and officials say the new polymer bills will be even harder to counterfeit.

Though it may seem strange to use money as an analogy for Christians, there are some interesting parallels, beginning with the notion of value and availability. A \$100 bill is worth a hundred dollars, whether it's crisp or crumpled, clean or crusty. Regardless of where it's been or what it looks like, it's valuable because its worth is determined by the authority who commissioned it. It's the same with us. God doesn't love us more when we stay clean and reject us when sin leaves us worn and dingy. We're his children, precious in his sight. Though we can hurt and even anger him, we can't do anything that will make him stop loving us or consider us worthless. In fact, *"God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God didn't send his Son to condemn the world, but to save it."* (John 3:16,17)

But, like money, Christians are meant to do good in the world. He puts us into circulation so our influence can be felt, especially among those who need our love and support most. All the money in the world is useless if it sits in a vault, and our faith is just as meaningless if it doesn't translate into sacrificial service. *"Just as the body is dead without breath, so also faith is dead without good works."* (Jas. 2:26)

Now that Christians are in such short supply, the value of our influence is even higher but — just like the money of old — we have to build trust in our integrity by revealing what we're truly made of. And it doesn't help when there are so many counterfeit Christians around, in all sorts of denominations.

Thankfully, there are some security measures that help determine who's genuine and who's not. The best test is to hold us up to the Light. If we bear the imprint of Jesus on their heart, we're not phoney, just flawed. But not to worry. One day, God will take us out of circulation and replace our tired bodies with ones that will last forever. You can take that to the bank!

Rick Gamble