



## The Bottom Line

*by Rod Barks*

Everyone has a bottom line – and I'm not just talking about plumber's pants.

It's that intangible inner drive compelling us to press forward in life. It's the perspective by which we measure success. When missing in others, it elicits sympathy; when absent in our own lives, longing.

For many North Americans, the bottom line is money; a sincere soul scan reveals a deeply imbedded dollar sign resulting in an insatiable thirst to pursue and accumulate more 'things' -- house, boat, RV, car, bigger house, travel...

Though common, this bottom line is far from healthy. Wide-spread acceptance does not always equate with long-term health.

H1N1 (Swine Flu) is a classic recent example. Easily caught – but why would you want to?

Though described as a developed nation, we can glean much from our “less fortunate” neighbours. The diversity of wealth-models was unveiled for me a few years ago while living in Guatemala for several months.

The bottom line for most Latinos is relationship. I stood in a long bank lineup one day while the one teller chatted with a customer for 15-20 minutes about seemingly trivial matters – mutual friends, plans for the next day, kid’s activities (and probably that gringo who kept looking at his watch). It didn’t appear to bother my fellow line-mates and they waited patiently knowing, I suspect, that a relational transaction always trumped a rapid financial one.

Measuring the bottom line via finances is a crazy, mixed up proposition in that the line keeps moving. The more we have, the more we want. We aren’t satisfied with measuring up to the proverbial Jones’s – we want to be the Jones’s. No wonder depression is rampant in North America.

Now I want to be clear, finances are not inherently evil – they are inanimate, possessing no life of their own. It is the laying down of one’s life in pursuit of the evasive dollar that becomes nothing less than evil. Jesus said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

If our treasure is mere money, our heart will be there and we will automatically begin to relationally short-change those around us. We will work unnecessary extra hours and spend money on selfish endeavors. Even our savings will be frequently tainted by fear. Lofty pursuits can result in relationally impoverished lives.

I have sat with many individuals at their death bed and not one has asked for a financial statement or for one more glimpse of their chequebook. Final statements did not involve the words, “buy gold” or “sell GM stock”. Without



fail they speak of relationship – with family and with God.

Those who have invested in healthy relationships die well – surrounded by loved ones and excited about meeting God face-to-face. Others who have foolishly embraced finances -- well, they still die. But there's not a lot of warm fuzzies in the room; it's called cold, hard cash for a reason.

Nurture relationship with God and others. The result will be a life well lived, and that's really all that matters in the end – for North Americans, Central Americans and yes, plumbers.

