

Managing Our Resources with Integrity

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Though primarily referring to money, *resources* also represent our possessions, time, life, family, job, health, etc.—everything God gives us to hold for him. As we examine the first five points on the sheet titled *Contrasting the World and Scripture*, we'll discover that there are two economies operating in the world: God's economy and man's economy. **And the most significant difference between these two economies is God.**

- I. **The Bible Speaks Practically about managing our resources:**
Scripture says as we learn and follow biblical principles of how to handle money, we will draw close to Christ and learn to be content. **The world says** God plays no role in handling money, and our happiness is based on being able to afford what we desire.

The Bible has a lot to say about possessions. While there are 500 verses on prayer, and some 500 on faith, there are more than **2,350** verses on how to handle our resources. Jesus said more about money than any other thing, and 16 of the 38 parables of Jesus are concerned with how to handle money and possessions. Let God speak to us about life, resources and priorities, so that we can be people with integrity and godly character. Isaiah 55:8, 9—“*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.*”

Why did Jesus have so much to say about money?

- **1. Because how we handle our money affects our relationship with Him.** When we handle resources God's way, we have the opportunity to have a more intimate relationship with Him. Luke 16:11—“*So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?*” The true riches that Jesus is speaking about are *relationships*—about people and their relationship with God and others. The depth of our relationship with Christ will influence the way we earn, spend, save and give our money.
- **2. Money is the primary competitor with Christ for lordship of our lives.** Scripture says it's impossible for us to serve money and still *serve* the Lord. Matthew 6:24—“*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold on to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.*”

When the 12th Century “religious” crusades were being fought, they had to purchase the services of mercenaries to fight on their behalf, and the crusaders insisted that the mercenaries be baptized before they went off to fight. It's said that the mercenaries, as they were being baptized, would take

their swords and hold them out of the water to symbolize that Jesus Christ was not in control of their swords, and that they were free to use their swords any way they wished. Some people, today, handle their money that way, though they may not be as blatant about it as the mercenaries. Even some Christians hold their pocket, wallet, or purse “out of the water,” so to speak, saying, “God, you may be Lord of my life, but **not my money**—I’ll handle that myself.”

- **3. Jesus had much to say about money because so much of peoples’ lives revolve around the use of it.** How much time do we invest in earning money on a job, deciding how to spend it, thinking about what we can afford or what we might save or where we might give? Money and possessions consume an awful lot of our time and energy.

II. Understanding God’s Part: Scripture says what we possess, God owns. He is the sovereign, loving, living God who controls the circumstances of our lives. **The world says** what we possess we own, and we control our destiny.

God owns everything! In Scripture God calls himself by more than 250 names, and Master best describes his ownership. Both Job and Moses knew the Lord and accepted his role as Master. After losing his children, his health and all his possessions, Job was still able to worship God, because he knew God’s role as Master of all his possessions. And Moses forsook the treasures of Egypt and chose to suffer mistreatment with the people of God.

What is or are our most valued material possessions? For some it isn’t just one thing; it could be an area of our lives. Deuteronomy 10:14—“*...to the Lord your God belongs...the earth and all that is in it.*” Psalm 50:10-12—“*For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills...everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, would I not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all it contains.*”

- As World War II was drawing to a close, many hungry orphans were gathered up and placed in camps where they were well fed. Despite excellent care, they slept poorly. They seemed nervous and afraid. Finally, a psychologist came up with a solution. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold after he or she went to bed. If they were hungry, more food was provided. And when they were full, a final piece of bread was given to them to be held onto and not eaten all night. That piece of bread had wonderful results: The children went to bed holding their bread knowing that they had something to eat the next day. That guaranteed that they would have a restful and contented sleep.

- A. The Lord has given us his guarantee—our “piece of bread.” “*And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches*” Philippians 4:19. As we claim his promises and understand **his ownership of everything**, we can relax and be content. **God made everything—it’s His**. Recognizing his ownership is critical in allowing Jesus Christ to be the Lord of our possessions. “*No one...can be my disciple who does not give up all his own possessions*” Luke 14:33. (Giving up ownership of them, not stewardship of them.)
- B. If we believe we own even a single possession, then the circumstances affecting that possession will be reflected in our attitude. Because, if something good happens to that possession, then we’ll be happy, but if something bad happens we’ll be discontented.
- C. Giving up ownership isn’t easy and it’s not a once-and-for-all transaction. We constantly—every minute of every day—need to be reminded that God owns all of our possessions. When the Lord told Abraham to take his only son and offer him as a sacrifice, Abraham obeyed, demonstrating his willingness to give up his dearest possession.
- III. **Our Part—Faithfulness: Scripture says** we will only be content if we have been a faithful steward managing all our resources from the Lord’s perspective. **The world says** we earned our money; so we’ll spend it any way we choose and we’ll be happy.

We are to be people who live in right relationship with God and with one another and who manage responsibly the resources entrusted to us in ways that show that our possessions belong to God—that’s called *stewardship*!

- We’re responsible for 100% of the possessions God has entrusted to us.
- We’re accountable to God for the use of our finances and possessions.
- We’re accountable to other people.
- Our stewardship is measured by the relationship between the development of our character and our use of money.

- IV. **Give With Joy As to the Lord: Scripture says** “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” Acts 20:35b NIV. **The world says** it’s more blessed to receive than to give.

Giving deals radically with the sins of covetousness and greed in our lives: **1) the lust to have** and **2) the fear to release and trust**. And lust and fear are just as strong among the poor as those who are well off. The **attitude** of our heart is key, because it is God who sees our hearts and rewards us accordingly. Our attitude in giving and sharing should always be:

•**In love** (motive): 1 Corinthians 13:3 *“If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”*

•**Cheerfully**: 2 Corinthians 9:7 *“Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*

•**Prayerfully**: James 1:5 (wisdom to be merciful but to give wisely)

A gift benefits the receiver, yes, but according to God’s economy if a gift is given with the proper attitude, the giver benefits more than the receiver by:

1. Increase in intimacy—directs our attention and hearts to Christ **Matthew 6:2**.
2. Development of character—being conformed to the image of the ‘Giver’.
3. Investments for eternity—the heavenly bank account **Phil 4:17**.
4. Material increase to perform good deeds **Proverbs 11:24, 25**.

Giving is an act of worship, and it starts with the Tithe, which belongs to God: It is set apart, dedicated, marked for God. Ten percent is the minimum amount we should give. Leviticus 27:30 *“All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord’s, it is holy to the Lord.”* Why tithe? Because—

- 1) The Bible says so;
- 2) It belongs to God already;
- 3) It defines our priority;
- 4) It puts money in its place; and
- 5) It gets the mission done!

• **Offerings to God** Leviticus Chapters 1-5 outline the different types of offerings that the Israelites were commanded to offer in worship, detailing the **kind of offerings**, the **place it was to be offered**, **when**, **how and by whom**, etc. In the New Testament, though, we’re asked to *“...offer our bodies a living sacrifice, wholly and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”*—the connection between the worship of God and, literally, our physical offerings. We give as an act of worship—adoration and gratitude—to God.

It’s easy to sing praises and express our joy to God in worship. But when we take what he’s given us—that means something to us—and give it to God, then we’re asking the personal question: **Where is the treasure in our life?** The wise men in Matthew 2:11 bowed down and worshipped the infant Jesus. They didn’t stop there: They opened their treasures and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh—communion and heartfelt worship of God through their offerings. **Release-Claim Deed*—fill out and sign as the Holy Spirit leads, as an offering unto the Lord.

• Spiritual leaders are to be supported Scripture says in 1 Timothy 5:17 and Galatians 6:6, as are our family in 1 Timothy 5:8—*“If anyone does not provide for his own, especially for those of his own household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.”* Meeting the needs of our family is priority. Today, many husbands fail to provide for their wives and children; parents neglect their children, and sons and daughters ignore elderly parents—Isaiah 38:7.

• In Leviticus, the farmer was instructed to leave some “handfuls on purpose” for the poor, Matthew 25:35-46. In some mysterious way that we can’t fully comprehend, Jesus personally identifies with the poor and needy. Do we want to minister to Jesus? Then we minister to the poor and those in need. Verse 40 says, *“Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me.”*

Close to 1 billion people go to bed hungry every night in the world. Remedy is overwhelming to us, because our economy says if you take what we each have, it equals very little. But **God’s economy says if you take what we have plus Jesus, it equals all we need and more—overflow.** God wants us to give our little, plus Jesus, and it will be multiplied for the Kingdom of God. Scripture doesn’t say exactly how much we should give totally—other than the tithe. And the lack of a fixed total may be because the decision on the amount given should be based on a personal relationship with God, as we seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in prayer—1 Timothy 6:18.

V. **Keep Our Treasures in Heaven:** Scripture says *“The wise man saves for the future, but the foolish man spends whatever he gets (Proverbs 21:20, LB). Matthew 6:20 “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal.” And Luke 12:34 “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” The world says* we should spend all we make. And if we should save, trust in those savings.

Save and invest, yes, but don’t hoard and don’t count on your savings in times of trial—count on the Lord! Look at the financial situation in America today. We do not live in a purposeless universe; human history is going somewhere. God has a plan for us—Jeremiah 29:11. We don’t want to lose out on His plan for our life: **The only currency of value in heaven is our present service, love, character, and generous giving to God’s Kingdom.**

Jim Elliot, martyred missionary to Ecuador, said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” And he had said that before he was called to give his very ‘life’ for the people who would brutally take it! But God had a plan to take Jim’s life—and the lives of the four other missionary men—and redeem those murdering Auca Indians for eternity!