

What Did We Expect?

Lesson 11: **November 13, 2014**—*stewardship*

Greed—are we surprised by it? *Webster* defines greed as *n* : acquisitive (eager to acquire) or **selfish desire beyond reason**. CNBC offers at least three programs that I'm aware of having to do with excessive wanting and making of money: *American Greed*; *Shark Tank* and *Mad Money*. The advertisement for *Shark Tank* makes the following claims: "It's the lean green shark machine: It's all about money; the only thing that really matters is money", and "The guy that makes the money makes the rules"!

On January 6, 2014, I watched *American Greed* and discovered how a man named Michael Vorce conned Grand Rapids, MI, bankers out of some \$20 million. And then about a salesman and preacher's son, Randy Treadwell, who, with three other men, used religious connections and outlandish Ponzi schemes to steal—for four years—from 1,700 investors (victims) in 39 states some \$65 million. October 13, 2004, federal search warrants were issued, and even while the FBI had him under indictment, Treadwell was still trying to rip others off through his intense greed, lies and avarice. For these, the lure of wealth won!

Do believers love the world by craving, lusting and boasting, too? Yes! "Covetousness, materialism and worldliness are among the most pervasive (yet unacknowledged) sins of modern Christians," said Gregory Frizzell. "Often, believers are blind to the materialism that subtly saturates our very souls. Rather than adhering to God's standard of moderation, high debt has become the norm." 1 John 2:15-17 "*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16For everything in the world—the **cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does**—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*"

Christians have 1) the **providence** of God (Philippians 4:10),
2) the **power** of God (Philippians 4:11-13), and
3) the **promises** of God (Philippians 4:14-20).

So why would we depend on anyone else or even our self? And we do it all the time. In a study on Philippians in his book, *Be Joyful*, Warren Wiesbe shared: "A young pastor came to a church that had been accustomed to raising its annual budget by means of suppers, bazaars, and the like. He told his officers he could not agree with their program. 'Let's pray and ask God to meet every need,' he suggested. 'At the end of the month, pay all the bills and leave my salary till the last. If there isn't enough money for my salary, then I'm the one who suffers, and not the church. But I don't think anybody is going to suffer!'"

“The officers were sure that both the pastor and the church would die, but such was not the case. Each month every bill was paid, and at the end of the year there was a surplus in the treasury for the first time in many years.”

In referring to Philippians 1:21 and Paul’s statement “*for me to live is Christ*”—Charles Spurgeon said, “Jesus is to believers the one pearl of great price, for whom we are willing to part with all that we have.” And Ellen G. White, referring to Luke 14:33 said, “In giving ourselves to God, we must necessarily give up all that would separate us from Him. God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain.”

Here’s a **TEST** from Proverbs 11:4 and 28—to see if we are trusting in riches:

1. Priority test—**what motivates us**, money or God? What consumes us?
2. Stewardship test—**is there anything in our possession that we would hesitate to give up if God asked for it?**
3. Admiration test—**what do we admire?** Luke 16:1-2—we’re stewards!

There is greedy depravity even in a toddler: If I like it it’s mine; if I saw it first, it’s mine; if I want it, it’s mine, and even if you have it, it’s mine...and so on.

Is giving the antidote for greed? No, because we are to be ‘stewards’ even in our giving: Matthew 6:1-4 “***Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.***

²“So when you give to the needy, **do not announce** it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. ³But when you give to the needy, **do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing**, ⁴so that your giving may be **in secret**. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Henry van Dyke said, “...what we call our fortunes, good or ill, are but the wise dealing and distributions of a Wisdom higher and a Kindness greater, than our own.” Luke 24:15 “*As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; ¹⁶but they were kept from recognizing him.*” Spurgeon says of them and us: “And why do we not see him? It must be ascribed in our case, as in the disciples’, to unbelief. They evidently **did not expect to see Jesus**, and therefore they did not know him.” Faith is the antidote for unbelief. Spurgeon again: “Little did Jacob expect deliverance from Egypt.”

Professor Alexander Tyler warns democratic governments: “A **democracy** cannot exist as a permanent form of government. It can only exist until the voters discover that they can vote themselves money from the public treasury. From that moment on, the majority always votes for the candidate promising the most money from the public treasury. With the result that a democracy always collapses over loose fiscal policies, and what follows is a dictatorship.”

Here is a reversal: folks who expected much but got little! Why? Because obedience is the way to blessing from God every time! The prophet Haggai wrote his book at age 70, and 5 times in it we are called “to give careful thought, or to consider”. Haggai 1:7-9 “*This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘Give careful thought to your ways. 8Go up into the mountains and bring down timber and build the house, so that I may take pleasure in it and be honored,’ says the LORD. 9You expected much but see, it turned out to be little. What you brought home, I blew away. Why?’ declares the LORD Almighty. ‘Because of my house, which remains a ruin, while each of you is busy with his own house.’*” Then Scripture lists the calamities God sent to this disobeying number because of their neglect in rebuilding the LORD’s house. We are to give to God first, and then to others. Someone has aptly warned, “If you don’t give, it’s highly likely you have nothing to give.” Proverbs 3:9-10 “*Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits (worship through giving) of all your crops. 10then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.*”

► **We can expect that God wants us to know where worth is:** We must come to ‘know’ from God’s word where to place our life’s work—investments, treasures and values. Scripture teaches that treasures in heaven are laid up, as treasures on earth are laid down. Psalm 119:57 “*You are my portion, O LORD; I have promised to obey your words.*” Proverbs 11:28 “*Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.*”

Henry Ford had a line of vehicles that just wouldn’t run right, so he called in a retired mechanic friend of his named Charley Steinmitz to find the problem and make the fix. “Send me the bill,” said Ford to Steinmitz. When the bill came it read:

- For tinkering with the motors—\$10.00
- For knowing where to tinker—\$9,990.00. Henry Ford paid the bill!

► **We can expect protection from Satan’s attacks on our stewarded gain** because it is promised in Malachi 3:11, right after the prophet exhorts us to **faithfully tithe**, bringing our **offerings into God’s storehouse** (church), and, therefore, **not** robbing Him. Proverbs 21:5 “*The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.*”

H. Jackson Brown, Jr., in *Life’s Little Instruction Book*, has given us some excellent guides (I just selected these few):

- #176 “Read carefully anything that requires your signature. Remember the big print giveth and the small print taketh away.”
- #242 “Be cautious about lending money to friends. You might lose both.”
- #253 “Be modest. A lot was accomplished before you were born.”
- #288 “Discipline yourself to save money. It’s essential to success.”

Psalm 119:57, again, and this time through verse 60: “*You are my portion, O LORD; I have promised to obey your words. 58I have sought your face with all my heart, be gracious to me according to your promise. 59I have considered my ways and have turned my steps to your statutes. 60I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands.*” “With God for thy **portion** thou art rich indeed, for He will supply thy need, comfort thy heart, assuage thy grief, guide thy steps, be with thee in the dark valley, and then take thee home, to enjoy Him as thy portion forever,” said Spurgeon. “‘I have enough,’ said Esau; this is the best thing a worldly man can say, but Jacob replies, ‘I have all things’, which is a note too high for carnal minds.”

► We can expect the multiplication of God’s provision to Israel and us: Egypt represented not enough; the wilderness just enough, **but the Promised Land pictured much more than enough**. God promises daily bread, daily supply, daily strength, and we cannot improve on that! We must ‘know’ that our lives are daily lived, and that all we need to live that day will be provided.

There is a daily monetary multiplication that we fail to grasp, illustrated by the following: If we have a choice of (a) getting one million dollars cash today or (b) receiving a penny a day doubled every day for one full month—on the 31st day, which would we choose? Being the impatient people we are and wanting to have it all today, just see what we would have missed. Take the penny through week one and we have 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32 and 64. On the 7th day it is only 64 cents, but, on **the 31st day it is \$10,737,418.24!**

► We need to ask for and expect God’s wisdom for our situation: Ecclesiastes 5:13-14 “*I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, 14or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him.*” **Ecclesiastes 7:12** “*Wisdom is a shelter, as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: that wisdom preserves the life of its possessor.*” Did we get that? Wisdom is a shelter that can preserve our lives! And 7:14 “*When times are good, be happy; but when times are bad, consider: God has made the one as well as the other. Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future.*”

Ecclesiastes 9:14-16 is Scripture’s shortest short-story—“*There was once a small city with only a few people in it. And a powerful king came against it, surrounded it and built huge siegeworks against it. 15Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man. 16So I said, ‘Wisdom is better than strength.’ But the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.*” This story shows us that our wisdom will not be appreciated by a lost world, because God’s wisdom is not recognized by the world. So, we must live our lives wisely, seeking only His approval! Proverbs 13:8 “*A man’s riches may ransom his life, but a poor man hears no threat.*”

► **We cannot expect to serve both God and Money:** Luke 16:13-15 “No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. **You cannot serve both God and Money.** 14The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus 15He said to them, ‘You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight.’” Proverbs 11:7 “When a wicked man dies, his hope perishes; **all he expected from his power comes to nothing.**”

A rich young ruler ran up to Jesus in Mark 10 and fell on his knees asking: “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus, knowing his heart, asked: “Why do you call me good? ...No one is good—except God alone.” We cannot call Him ‘good’ unless we call Him God. Verse 21 says that the Lord looked at him and loved him; and then He challenged money’s hold on him: “One thing you lack...Go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” Jesus was not saying that giving to the poor was a way to heaven; He was demonstrating how our riches—love of money over love of God—will work to keep us out of heaven! This man was trying to get to God the same way he’d gotten everything else—and it flat wasn’t going to work.

Bud Post won \$16 million dollars, blew it and is very unhappy: See, we won’t be happy with more until we’re happy with what we have! Money cannot buy at least seven things, says van Dyke: 1. health, 2. long life, 3. wisdom, 4. a cheerful spirit, 5. a clear conscience, 6. peace of mind, and 7. a contented heart. He said, “It is not true that a person can dispose of money as they choose. The purposes for which it can be used are strictly bounded.” An apt quote from Matthew Henry: “When all is gone; God is not...gone!” Psalm 127:2 “*In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat—for he grants sleep to those he loves.*”

Strength is in what we feed on. Isaiah 55:1 “*Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.*” McClaren stated: “We may have as much of God as we will. Christ puts the key of the treasure chamber into our hand, and bids us take all that we want.” John 6:27 “*Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.*”

► **We can expect success from obedience to God and His Word.** Joshua 1:8 “Do not let this book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. **Then you will be prosperous and successful.**” “We cannot be delivered from this ‘vain expense of passions that forever ebb and flow,’ this wretched, torturing, unsatisfied, unsatisfying self,” warned van Dyke, “until we come to Jesus and give our lives to him to be absorbed as his life was in loving obedience to God and loving service to our fellow human beings.”