

For the past (3) weeks, we've been discussing the idea of Biblical stewardship and how to *Master our Money* by bringing our lives and blessings under the Master's control.

In doing so, we've have not focused on the 10% God asks us to give as a starting point, but on how we manage the other 90% for our good and His glory.

So far we've looked at the **Ownership Principle** which simply recognizes that God owns it all and we're stewards or managers of all He has entrusted to us.

The earth's is the Lord's and everything in it. Ps. 24:1

We looked at the *Parable of the Talents* to remind us that God is the owner of everything and has entrusted us w/ His blessings and w/ the expectation we maximize and grow what He has given to us.

In week 2, we looked at the **Debt Dilemma** to remind us that debt may not be a sin, but neither is it our friend – b/c debt, especially to earthly, non-essential items – **can inhibit our ability to give and go for God.**

Last week we looked at God's call on our lives to invest in eternal things which will last instead of things that'll burn, rust, and rot. In reviewing the *Parable of the Shrewd Manager*, we discussed how God wants us to maximize our earthly wealth for eternal purposes.

Today as we close out this short series, I want to spend a few minutes discussing the concept of **missional giving** in light of the tithe and grace giving.

I'm not going to sugar-coat it – **the church and Christians have a giving problem.** W/ statistics saying the avg. believer gives around 2.7% of their blessings to Kingdom causes – it testifies that we're **too afraid, too arrogant, too apathetic, or too unaware** to give back to God to support the work of the kingdom. In either case, **it is a sad testimony for our concern for the lost world around us.**

Before I go any further, please know my heart today isn't to shame, guilt, or manipulate anyone into giving – but I am going to challenge all of us to live for something greater than ourselves that might resonant into eternity. I want to call all of us into a life of missional giving.

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. Mt. 6:24

Wasn't this the point of Jesus' difficult words to the *Rich Young Ruler* in **Luke 18**? After the man turned away to retain his wealth, Jesus spoke to his disciples of how it was impossible to have wealth and God as the masters of our life.

Driscoll explains – Money and wealth and possessions are among the greatest idols of our culture, and there is simply no way to be a disciple of Jesus apart from learning to worship God w/ stewardship.

In other words, not just how we give but also how we spend is indicative of the depth, sincerity, and intimacy of our faith.

In the context of 21st century America – we discover quite quickly how greedy and goofy we can be w/ money. In a [businessweek.com](#) article in 2007, there is a story about the crazy things people will do for their pets.

If there's still any doubt whether the pampering of pets is getting out of hand, the debate should be settled once and for all by *Neuticles* – a patented testicular implant that sells for up to \$919 a pair. The idea, says the inventor Gregg Miller, is to 'let people restore their pets to anatomical preciseness' after neutering, thereby allowing the animal to retain their natural look and self-esteem. 'People thought I was crazy when I started the company 13 yrs ago.' But he has sold more than 240k pairs. 'Neutering is creepy. But w/ *Neuticles*, it is as if nothing has changed. WHATEVER!

Folks, you can't make this stuff up. Yes, nearly \$1,000 to give your pets' fake body parts to help w/ their self-esteem. Meaning *Neuticles* has made over \$229 mil.

But this is just the tip of the iceberg. American spend over \$41 bil. annually on buying, feeding, and caring for pets – or more than the GDP of over 100 nations in the world.

A Little Perspective. If 1 yrs. worth of pet expenses were used to install deep water wells in Africa at \$30k a piece, 1.4 bil. wells could be built across that continent (more than (1) well per person). If the money spent to protect our dog's self-esteem was used, more than 7k wells could be built.

Now I'm not slamming on people w/ pets, b/c frankly, we're spending money on much less important items than our pets; but folks, *as Christ-followers, we have to keep some things in perspective if we're going to be faithful stewards of God's resources for kingdom purposes.*

Missional giving makes a financial priority of those things that are priority to God. It doesn't recognize the dichotomy b/w God's money and my money – but understands the responsibility to put into circulation God's resources for kingdom purposes and Great Commission endeavors.

As managers of God's possessions, our responsibility is to handle "our" stuff just as God would if He were on earth.

I Two Giving PRINCIPLES

A The TITHING Principle

Stewardship involves more than your money; God wants your hearts. God is deeply and profoundly in love w/ you and wants to be in an eternal relationship w/ you. **But He understands something we seem to have a problem w/ – He knows man’s nature is to love what he can possess.**

Don't store up riches for yourselves here on earth, where moths and rust destroy, and robbers break in and steal.

Instead, store up riches for yourselves in heaven, where moths and rust can't destroy, and robbers can't break in and steal. For your heart will always be where your riches are...

You cannot be a slave of two masters; you will hate one and love the other; you will be loyal to one and despise the other.

You cannot serve both God and money. Mt. 6:21-24

Man has a struggle – He likes to store up things on earth instead of in heaven. He wants it now. To help us w/ this struggle, God requires that we tithe.

Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. Mal. 3:10

tithe (first 10th) the tithe is not O.T. – It is prior to the Law, Jesus modeled it and fulfilled it. It is a principle to guide us to intimacy. So God wants His people to give Him the first 10% of their life including your treasures, time, talents, tongue, temple, and testimony.

Honor the Lord w/ your wealth w/ the first fruits of your crops, then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats brimming w/ new wine. Pr. 3:10-11

Remember – God owns it all. He doesn't own just the first 10%, He owns all of it. He lets us live on 90% in a way that honors Him. The 10% is a reminder of where it came from. God says, "I want you to remember and never forget if it weren't for Me you'd have nothing.

In talking about the tithe, Dt. 14:22 says believers are to give the first 10% of all of their profits and blessings back to Him. "*Be sure to set aside a 10th of all your fields' produce each year.*" Why? Look at the last part of v. 23 "*... so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always.*"

The purpose of tithing is to teach us to put God first in every situation. LB

As I've already stated, stewardship isn't solely about your treasure, it's also about your time, talents, tongue, temple, and testimony – and God wants the first 10th of every area.

But to be clear – the tithe begins w/ your wealth b/c your wallet is the doorway to your heart and life – *Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.* Mt. 6:24

Nonetheless, the tithing of your treasure is the starting point of giving, but not the ending point. It is an act of obedience to be brought into the storehouse of the local church.

B The TREASURE Principle – Grace Giving

Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, crushed down, full and running over, they will give to you. For in the same measure as you give, it'll be given to you again. Lk. 6:38

All giving, including the tithe is a form of grace giving, but there is a definite call to go above and beyond the tithe under the compelling of the H.S. to give and support the work of the Kingdom. It might be a building fund, a mission trip... but we are to give as inspired and called by God.

Seed Faith is a regular gift of faith placed in the offering plate every time it's passed asking for God to increase it.

Grace Gift is a one time, or special gift, given to meet a specific need of ministry to further God's work.

Sacrificial Gift is a gift that requires a step of faith due to the personal cost incurred to further God's work.

II Six Giving MISCONCEPTIONS

Last week I stated that **money is a test**. It is a test to see where our heart is. Another way to look at it is that money is a plumb line to confirm that our lives are in line w/ God. If our lives are out of plumb w/ God's plan, it reveals the symptoms of a greater problem – other gods.

Over my years as a pastor, I've come to discover there are many reasons God gets the least and the leftovers or even left out; but in every case, we allow a few misconceptions to hold us hostage or support our w/holding from God.

Mis. 1 – Giving is not IMPORTANT

Giving is the key to living; it's the key to revival and life. It serves as a barometer of where we are spiritually.

Key: God isn't interested in getting it from you – He is interested in getting it to you.

Mis. 2 – My little won't make a DIFFERENCE

Tell that to Billy Graham. Avg. gift to B. G. Assoc. is \$6.00.

Tell that to the hungry crowd when Jesus took the lunch of a boy and fed over 5000 people. **It reminds us that little can become much when God is in it.**

Out of every \$10 held by Christians, \$8 are in the hands of U.S. Christians. We need to remember God loves everyone else as much as He loves me and you; maybe He's given to you as a way to bless others.

Mis. 3 – I can't AFFORD to tithe/give

I know it doesn't make sense, but the reality is you can't afford not to give. God desires we give Him the best portion. So that He can bless us in return.

Honor the Lord w/ your wealth w/ the first fruits of your crops, then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats brimming w/ new wine. Pr. 3:10-11

Mis. 4 – I don't agree w/ how the church spends

- It is not your money – it is God's money.
- Guess what... I don't either. Think about it. If we had a meeting right now to discuss how our church should spend God's money, I can guarantee there'd be a number of preferences. We have to trust that those people called and set aside by the church are striving to invest the resources we have into Great Commission ministry.

Mis. 5 – God doesn't like BEGRUDGED giving

How many times have I heard that God would rather me not give than to give w/ a bad attitude? **Would you rather your children not obey or obey w/ a poor attitude?**

Yes – God wants us to give from a heart of love. He wants us to give out of an attitude of gratitude. But He desires our obedience over our sacrifice.

Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. 2 Cor. 9:6-7

Yes, God would prefer we give not out of reluctance (sorrow) or compulsion (forced). But just b/c we're reluctant or forced doesn't negate our responsibility or need to give.

Mis. 6 – There is no real BENEFIT in giving

- It makes me more like Jesus
- It reminds me of God's love and priority in my life
- It keeps things in perspective and less materialistic
- It strengthens my faith and resolve for people
- It allows God to bless me and for me to bless others