

A Kingdom Perspective On Material Possessions

Money's deception is that it can bring a false sense of security. Paul warned Timothy about just that:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

I Timothy 6:6-10 NIV

Do Your Possessions Own You?

The stewardship of material goods comes to grips with the question of ownership. To whom do you belong? To whom have you surrendered your will? Who calls the shots in your life?

Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? 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.

Luke 16:10-13 NIV

Most of us understand what it is that we would classify as earthly treasures. This list would include earthly possessions like cars, boats, clothes, houses, bank accounts, jewelry, portfolios, etc. In the Scripture, Jesus is warning us about protecting our heart from the love of all these things. They can seem so real, so lasting, so concrete, but in reality can disappear so quickly. They can be literally here today and gone tomorrow. Some of the ancient tombs discovered in the Middle East have been found packed with food and furniture and even slaves. Death is the great equalizer, the constant leveler. Yet all of those tombs, buried under sand for thousands of years, have done nothing for the ones who spent a lifetime of accumulation. Our stock portfolios are always at great risk to the ups and downs of the market, the wars and rumors of wars, the economy of the nation and the world, and the integrity of the company management in which we

invest. Our body and our mind, which may seem so healthy and sharp, may be wasted by disease or crushed by a mishap tomorrow.

What we care about, we invest in. If we invest our money with God, our attitude will be the same. We will be interested in the ministry advance of our local church and will pray for the expansion of His kingdom locally and globally. Note that Jesus is not saying that we should have nothing or enjoy nothing. Nor does he imply any kind of a sin. Christ is saying to us not to get too tied to these things. Be a conduit, not a dam. It is not about what we have, but what has us. If we center our life around our things or base our living upon our possessions, we will surely be disappointed. Don't base your life, your future, your well-being or your happiness on the things you have accumulated. Instead, be sure that you lay up for yourself the real treasures, the ones that will be of eternal value.

The Scriptures illustrate that giving of one's own things is an evidence of God's grace in a person's life (II Corinthians 8:4-7). Because 100 percent of what is received comes from God, we are responsible to use it wisely and in accordance with God's will. Like every other area of stewardship, God is interested in the whole picture, not just a percentage. What a person does with all his treasure is important to God.

Stewardship means recognizing your obligations to God because of Calvary.

Stewardship means that God owns you and is counting on you to become an instrument through which He can love and save the world. It's as simple as that! If you cannot offer yourself as a channel of God's wealth, how can He bless your life? The bottom line in stewardship is not money or a block of time, but your entire life.

Trusting God with Your Money

The person who takes stewardship seriously will regard his or her life, talents, strength and money as a trust from God. Trustees have specific responsibilities. They are charged with holding property in trust for someone else.

Scriptural principles give us clues as to how we can trust God with our money and our entire lives. Four steps may help simplify the process.

Placing God First

The first step is to put God first and He will supply our basic needs. A Christian should be content with having his needs met when he learns how to surrender all control of his life to God. Then God can entrust more responsibility to him.

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Matthew 6:33 NIV

Trusting God's Provision

A second step is to trust God to provide for financial well-being. We will probably experience both plentiful and lean times financially, for such is life; but if we will be faithful and not complain, we can be sure that God will provide.

God's Desire to Bless

Thirdly, God will care for our needs and He will even give us the desires of our hearts. According to Psalm 37:4, God enjoys giving to those He loves. We are directed to have fun (delight ourselves in the Lord) and are reminded that He loves us so much that He will just give us the principled desires of our heart.

Responsible with Finances

Jesus taught that we must be responsible in our finances. God is the source of all wealth. He is the original owner of all things, for He made all things. As Scripture has said, He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. God also gives us the ability to earn a living (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Really, all that we have or expect to obtain comes from God. Our clothes, cars, homes and jobs are ultimately all gifts from His bountiful hand. God is not stingy or tightfisted, nor does He refuse to share with mankind what is rightfully His.

Jesus also taught us that mankind is on earth for a very, very short time and then goes to an eternal destination. If we really understand this to be true, where we place our priorities and how we deal with our finances is extremely important. Should our resources be physical and temporal or spiritual and eternal? What is a man's real treasure? Matthew gives us a very concise answer to this question.

“But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Matthew 6:20, 21 NIV

What are man’s real treasures—that which thieves can steal and corrupt, or that which becomes part of our retirement plan in heaven? “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21 NIV).