

Managing Our Possessions

In our current series of lessons, we are studying how we can live effectively in a fallen world. There are many "dangers, toils, and snares" which would derail our walk with Jesus, and we need to be prepared to face each one of them successfully.

Today we look at the theme of money management. Money is obviously very powerful, both for good and ill. The apostle Paul said that the love of money is the root of all evil, and, at the same time, we know that money can accomplish great good. In our text this week Jesus tells a fascinating parable followed by some vital teachings on money management.

Luke 16:1-15

¹He also said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his possessions. ²And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your management, for you can no longer be manager.' ³And the manager said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do, so that when I am removed from management, people may receive me into their houses.' ⁵So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' ⁶He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' ⁷Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' ⁸The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings.

¹⁰"One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³No servant can serve two masters, for 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 God and money."

¹⁴The Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

Jesus says three primary things in this text.

1. Godly money management capitalizes on opportunities. (vs. 1-9)

Jesus teaches here that children of darkness are often more shrewd than the children of light in using earthly resources. The manager in his parable dishonestly cancels portions of the debt owed to his master. The dishonest manager is using worldly wealth to gain friends. Jesus teaches us that we should learn a lesson from this shrewd, dishonest manager: we too should learn to use our earthly resources to make friends in heaven. We do this, of course by serving the poor and evangelizing the lost.

2. Godly money management prepares us for ownership. (vs. 10-12)

In these verses, Jesus teaches us that there is a real connection between our stewardship in this life and our ownership in the next life. Right now we do not own anything. We are only managers. But in the Great Day to come, we will own the universe along with Jesus Christ. Our faithfulness now is a requirement for our inheritance then. How do we manage faithfully?

John Wesley once said, "Make as much as you can; save as much as you can; give as much as you can." The real question is whether we are managing our resources according to our selfish agendas or according to the Kingdom agenda.

3. Godly money management reveals Christ as master. (vs. 13-15)

Jesus teaches us that we can have only one master. If we love the one, we will hate the other. The perfect illustration of this fact is seen in the reaction of the Pharisees in verse 14. They loved their money; therefore they ridiculed Jesus. When Jesus challenges our money management, we will do one of two things: we will either, like the rich young ruler, withdrawal from him, or, like Zacchaeus, we will “come down out of our trees” and worship and serve him with our money. Which are you?

Discussion Questions

- 1) What are some of the "shrewd" ways in which we can manage our money?
- 2) When we say we want to know God's will, what issues do we normally have in mind? What issue does God have in mind? (see verse 3)
- 3) In managing money as believers, why does it not make any difference how much money we have?
- 4) Why does making more money rarely make us any happier?
- 5) Why is our money management a test of our loyalty to God as our master?

Related Reading:

The Treasure Principal
by Randy Alcorn

Counterfeit Gods
by Joshua Harris

Digging Deeper

What changes do you need to make in your money management in order to be serving God alone with your finances?