



The
FLOW
Adult CURRICULUM

#21

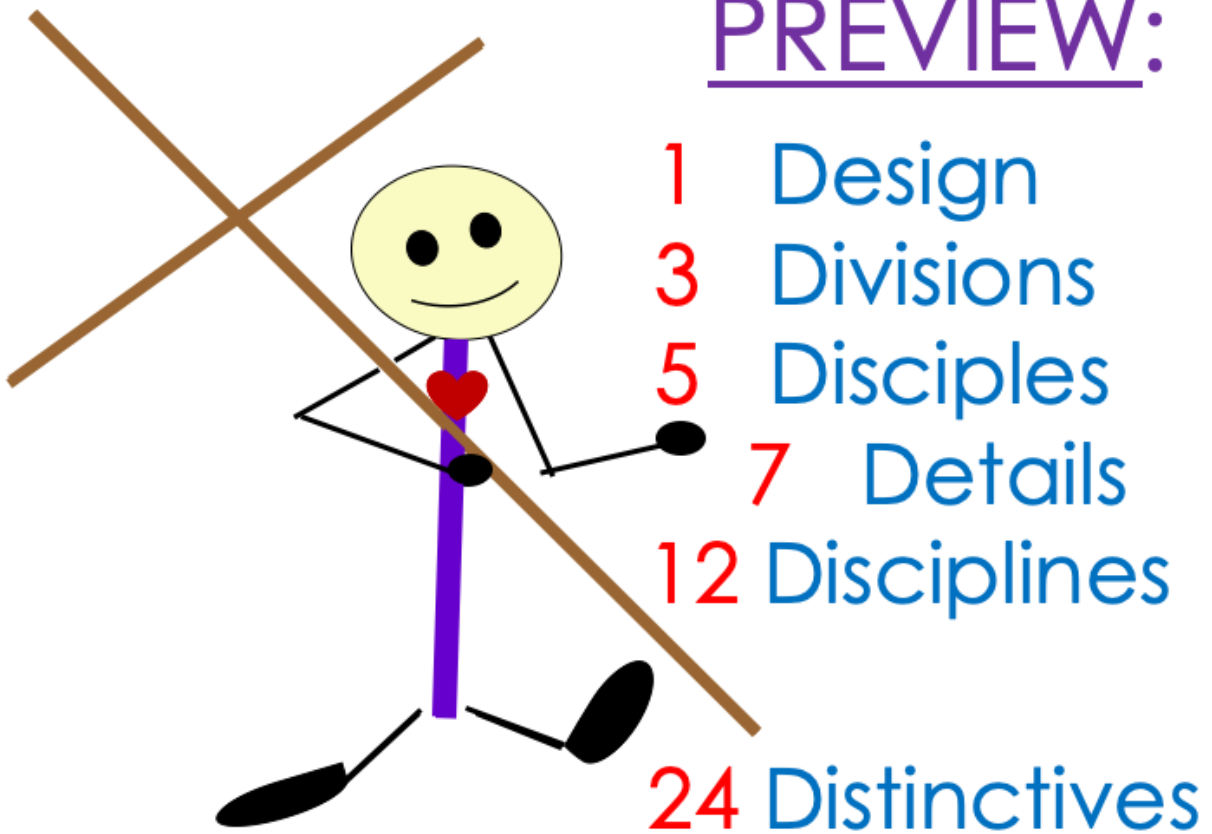
Stewardship

Luke 14:28

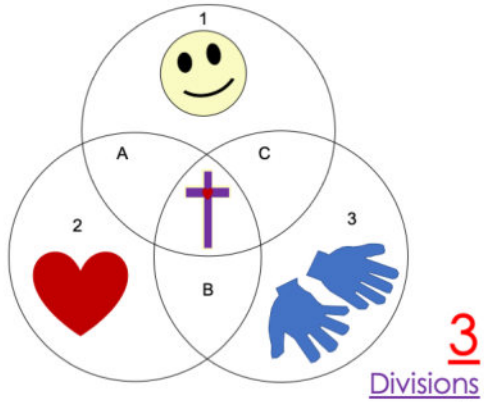
(Come And See Christianity book pages 68-69)

The FLOW

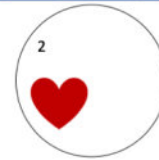
PREVIEW:



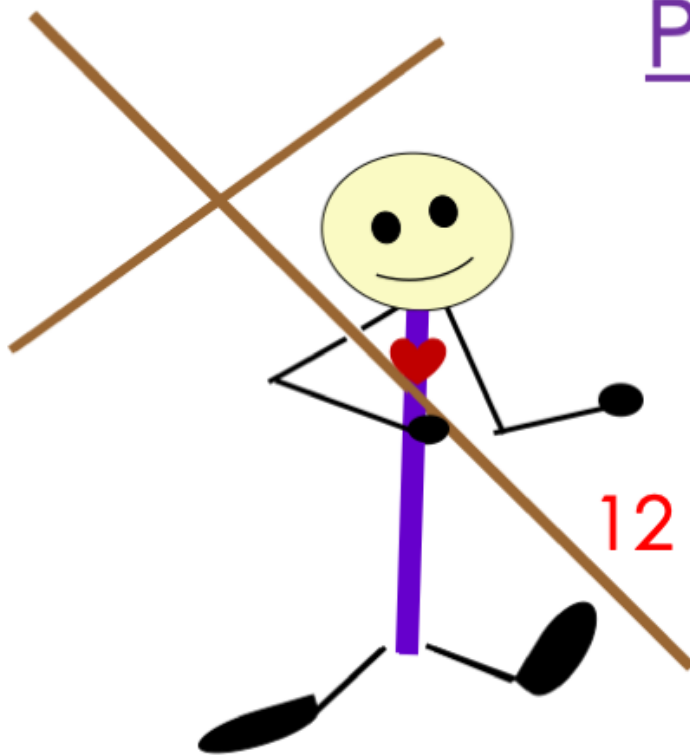
SECTION FIVE: 12 Disciplines



The
HEART



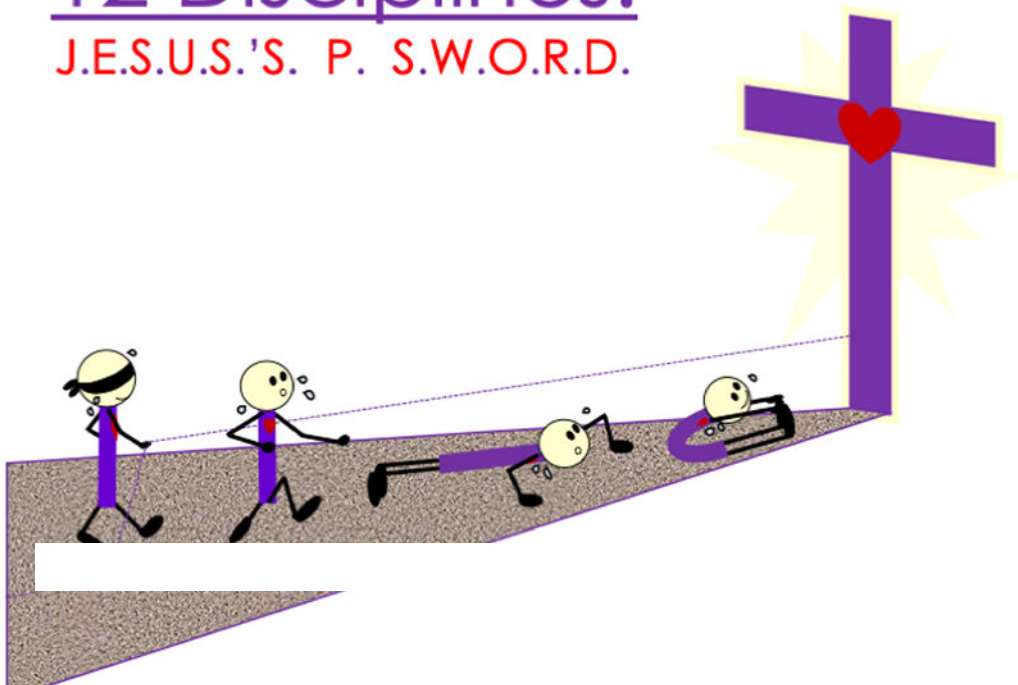
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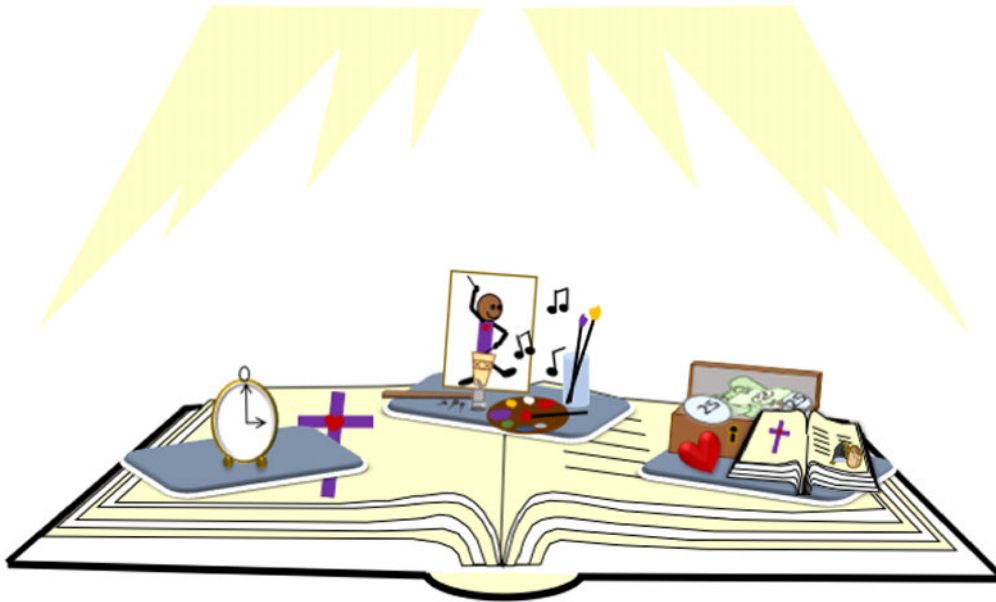


12 Disciplines

12 DISCIPLINES: Here are some heart exercises for you...
These discipleship “disciplines” can help Christians to strengthen their faith and grow as missional & maturing Christ-followers.

12 Disciplines:
J.E.S.U.S.'S P. S.W.O.R.D.





Stewardship

STEWARDSHIP: How we use our **Time, Talent, & Treasure** reveals a great deal of what is dominant in our **hearts** & lives... Christianity calls for **Christ-like stewardship** of ALL that God has **graciously given us.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17so that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

INTRO:

Welcome to another major transition point in your discipleship journey and our Come And See Christianity curriculum. By way of review, thus far, we have gone through Section One's single lesson on God's divine DESIGN, then Section Two's three unifying and introductory lessons on every human's 3 DIVISIONS (our HEAD, HEART, and HANDS); we then followed up with the universally inclusive definitions and descriptions of humanity's 5 types of people, also known as biblical DISCIPLES (the LOST, LOVER, LEARNER, LEADER, and LIFER), each having received their own lesson. Next came what we just completed, Section Four's 7 lessons on Christianity's fundamental, knowledge-based truths, also known as The DETAILS (FOUNDATIONS, FRAMEWORK, FACTS, FIGHT, FAITH, FAMILY, and FOREVER).

Now, in the same way that Sections 1-4 (and their 16 compiled lessons) all concentrated on aspects of "The HEAD" and the truth of God's Word, Section 5 will contain 12 complementary lessons (**J.E.S.U.S.'S. P.S.W.O.R.D.**) that focus on HEART exercises, also known as spiritual DISCIPLINES, that can help to grow and strengthen the Christian's truth-filled, loving, and faithfully obedient HEART...

12 HEART Strengthening DISCIPLINES:

1. *Journaling*
2. *Eat-nothing (Fasting)*
3. *Scripture intake*
4. *Understudy of Scripture*
5. *Solitude*
6. *Stewardship*
7. *Prayer*
8. *Serving*
9. *Worship*
10. *Outreach*
11. *Relationships*
12. *Development*

PRAYER:

LORD, we seek to bless You with all that is within us. Help us here, we pray, to be that blessing as we come to better understand You and Your eternal truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Help us to see with Your eyes and love with Your love, all that You would reveal to us through Your Word, Your will, and Your ways. May we grow in our grasp of Your realities, Your means of restoration, and Your mission of reproduction. In the holy name of Jesus, we pray. Amen and Amen

CONTEXT:

Macro

Spiritual Disciplines

(The content herein is predominantly derived and expanded upon from Dr. Don Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines* & Dr. Chuck Lawless' *Disciplined Warriors*.)

I. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES . . . FOR THE PURPOSE OF GODLINESS

*Ours is an undisciplined age. The old disciplines are breaking down.
... We **need** the rugged strength of Christian **character**
that can come only from discipline.*

- V. Raymond Edman

Discipline without direction is drudgery!

The Bible says of God's elect, "*For those whom He foreknew He also predestined **to be conformed** to the image of His Son"*
(Romans 8:29)

Although God will grant Christlikeness to us when Jesus returns, until then He intends for us to grow toward it.

We aren't merely to wait for holiness; we're to pursue it.

All who come to God trusting in the person and work of Jesus to make them right with God are given the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 1:13-14). The presence of the Holy Spirit causes all those in whom He resides to have new holy hungers they didn't have before.

Hebrews 12:14 is clear:
anyone who is not striving for holiness will not see the Lord!

The urgent question every Christian should ask is, *“How then shall I pursue holiness... How can I become more like Christ?”* God’s Word offers a clear answer in...

1 Timothy 4:7
“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness”

The only road to Christian maturity and godliness (a.k.a. Christlikeness & holiness) passes through the practice of the Spiritual Disciplines.

Godliness is the goal of the Disciplines... remember this and the ***Spiritual Disciplines become delights vs drudgery.***

II. WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES?

Spiritual Disciplines are those practices found in Scripture (and in application) that promote spiritual growth among believers in The Gospel.

Spiritual Disciplines are the **habits of devotion** and **experiential Christianity** that have been **practiced** by the people of God since biblical times.

The Disciplines could be described in several ways:

- “First, the Bible prescribes both **personal** and **interpersonal** Spiritual Disciplines.”
- **Spiritual Disciplines are activities, NOT attitudes.**

- Disciplines are practices... NOT character qualities, graces, or “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22-23).
- **Disciplines are things you do!**

The goal of practicing a given Discipline, is not about “DOing” as much as it is about “BEing,” that is, BEing like Jesus. But the biblical way to grow in BEing more like Jesus is through the rightly motivated doing of the biblical Spiritual Disciplines.

- We do specific practices *sometimes* that cultivate being more like Jesus *all the time*.
- Spiritual Disciplines are practices taught or modeled in the Bible. (Without this limitation, we might call anything we fancy a Spiritual Discipline.)
- Spiritual Disciplines found in Scripture are sufficient for knowing & experiencing God & growing in Christlikeness.
 - See 2 Timothy 3:16-17
 - See 2 Peter 1:3 & Philippians 4:13
- Spiritual Disciplines are practices derived from the gospel, NOT divorced from the gospel.
- ***Spiritual Disciplines are means, not ends.***

Godliness is both closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.

CAUTION: *While we cannot be godly without the practice of the Disciplines, we can practice the Disciplines without being godly...*

So, the Spiritual Disciplines are those personal and interpersonal activities given by God in the Bible as the sufficient means believers in Jesus Christ are to use in the Spirit-filled, gospel-driven pursuit of godliness, that is, closeness to Christ and conformity to Christ.

III. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES... AS MEANS TO GODLINESS

Godliness comes through discipline.

- God uses **three primary catalysts for changing us** and conforming us into Christlikeness, but only one is largely under our control.

#1: God uses people to change people.

- *“Iron sharpens iron,” says Proverbs 27:17*
- *Sometimes God uses our friends to sharpen us into more Christlike living, and sometimes He uses our enemies to file away our rough, ungodly edges.*

#2: God uses circumstance(s) as His catalyst for change.

#3: God uses spiritual disciplines to change His people.

*God uses spiritual disciplines
to work on His people from the inside out.*

Colossians 1:29 illustrates how **the efforts of a Christian & the work of God—can occur simultaneously** in a person indwelt by the Holy Spirit.” (cf. Philippians 2:13)

See here divine grace AND human responsibility...

*As physical disciplines promote bodily strength, so
the Spiritual Disciplines promote godliness.*

- Think of the Spiritual Disciplines as ways by which we can spiritually place ourselves in the path of God’s grace and seek Him, much **like Zacchaeus** placed himself physically in Jesus’ path and sought Him. The Lord, by His Spirit, still travels down certain paths that He has ordained and revealed in Scripture. We call these paths the Spiritual Disciplines...

*If we will place ourselves on these paths and look
for Him there by faith, we can expect
to encounter Him.*

IV. SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES... GOD’S WILL FOR CHRISTIANS

*“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness”
makes it plain that **this is a command of God**, not merely a suggestion.*

- **Holiness is not an option for those who claim to be children of the Holy One** (see 1 Peter 1:15-16), so neither are the means of holiness—that is, the Spiritual Disciplines—an option.
- Jesus is the model of discipline in & for godliness.
- Many professing Christians are spiritually undisciplined and seem to have little Christlike fruit and power in their lives. Yet, many of them are remarkably disciplined in other areas of their lives.
- Too many Christians trivialize their effectiveness for the kingdom of God through a lack of discipline.

- The danger of neglecting the Spiritual Disciplines is the danger of bearing little spiritual fruit—your life counting little for the sake of the kingdom.

“I’m not afraid of failure. I’m afraid of succeeding at things that don’t matter.”

- William Carey

“Freedom and discipline have come to be regarded as mutually exclusive, when in fact freedom is not at all the opposite, but rather the final reward, of discipline.”

Elisabeth Elliot

If your picture of a disciplined Christian is one of a grim, tight-lipped, joyless half-robot, then you’ve missed the point.

*By means of the Disciplines,
let the truths of The Gospel restore your soul.*

Micro

Sadly, **STEWARDSHIP, the intentional, careful, and responsible protection, management, and application of another party’s resources,** seems to be shrinking in today’s cultural conversations and priorities. Like so many other tenants of virtue and Christ-likeness, we are seeing less and less consideration, prioritization, and application of biblical STEWARDSHIP.

Why is that? The short answer is SIN. To expand the reply, for some, the answer is innocent ignorance – they simply do not know the particulars of God’s true expectations. For others, the reasons range from sinful-defiance and blatant rebellion to a heart-revealing, “shrinking back” (Hebrews 10:39) and active avoidance of anything attached to all aspects of accountability.

STEWARDSHIP, like all principled mandates within Christianity, is, at its core, three things: a test of priorities, a command to obey, as well as a realistic reflection of one’s biblical and missional relationship to The LORD Jesus... creation’s Creator and Christianity’s Christ.

*“Stewardship isn’t a subcategory of the Christian life.
Stewardship IS the Christian life.”*

- Randy Alcorn

Message

***“He is no fool who gives away what he cannot keep,
to gain what he cannot lose.”***

- Jim Elliot

If God is the owner, I am the manager.

I need to adopt a steward's mentality toward the assets He has entrusted - not given - to me. God's steward manages assets for the Owner's benefit. The steward carries no sense of entitlement to the assets he or she manages. It's his or her job to find out what the Owner wants done with His assets, then carry out His will.

- Randy Alcorn

BIG IDEA: Christianity calls for Christ-like stewardship of ALL that Christ has graciously given/gifted us.

PREVIEW:

1. TIME Stewardship
2. TALENT Stewardship
3. TREASURE Stewardship

TEXT:

Luke 14:28

For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it?

1. TIME Stewardship

Illustration:

The key to time is not duration but application!

"I was once young and now I am old, but not once have I been witness to God's failure to supply my need when first I had given for the furtherance of His work. He has never failed. in His promise, so I cannot fail in my service to Him."

- William Carey

Explanation:

Time is arguably one of life's greatest treasures and most fleeting resources. Think about it. Once time has past it can never be recreated or recaptured. When it is gone, it is gone. Consequently, Christianity calls for us to cherish and wisely use ALL of our time to the glory of God. Moreover, like an Olympic athlete whose position is measured in tenths and hundredths of a second, Christ-followers are called to faithfully fill every moment with what is BEST in God's eyes.

Ephesians 5:15-16

Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.

Application:

Every minute of every day has been lovingly gifted to you by a crucified Christ... give every second of every one of those minutes back to Him in loving cross-carrying.

The worst sin against stewardship is to waste your life.

- R. C. Sproul

2. TALENT Stewardship

Illustration:

Don't ever forget... your greatest personal gifts are GIFTS!

At the end of your life on earth you will be evaluated and rewarded according to how well you handled what God entrusted to you.

- Rick Warren

Explanation:

Biblically speaking, it is critical to recognize and understand that **even the most rigorously developed of human talents or skills begins as a gift from God.** Always! Bar none. All the hours spent in practice or education or in other forms of talent-development would be utterly worthless had the Lord not first gifted and instilled the potential and providential opportunities that are required to advance in any and all forms of human accomplishment.

Recognizing the aforementioned relationship between God's grace and your talents serves to inform, inspect, and inspire the proper relationship that should exist between your gifted talent and God's ultimate glory. In short, righteous STEWARDSHIP requires an ever-present passion, a heart-felt appreciation, and a missional application of one's skills, in an underlying and consistent context, to the glory of God. In the same way that every Christian has been saved to serve, so it is with all aspects of human exceptionalism and talent. ***Every Christian has been gifted by God's grace and for God's glory!***

Application:

Worship is giving God the best that He has given you. Be careful what you do with the best you have. Whenever you get a blessing from God, give it back to Him as a love gift. Take time to meditate before God and offer the blessing back to Him in a deliberate act of worship. If you hoard a thing for yourself, it will turn into spiritual dry rot, as the manna did when it was hoarded. God will never let you hold a spiritual thing for yourself; it has to be given back to Him that He may make it a blessing to others.

- Oswald Chambers

3. TREASURE Stewardship

Illustration:

The Parable of the Rich Fool can be found in [Luke 12:13-21](#). The key to understanding this parable is in verse 15 (and later summarized in verse 21). [Luke 12:15](#) says, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." Jesus says this to the man who asked Him to arbitrate between him and his brother. In ancient times, the firstborn was guaranteed a double portion of the family inheritance. More than likely, the brother who was addressing Jesus was not the firstborn and was asking for an equal share of the inheritance. Jesus refuses to arbitrate their dispute and gets to the heart of the matter: Covetousness! Jesus warns this person, and all within earshot, that our lives are not to be about gathering wealth. Life is so much more than the "abundance of possessions."

Jesus proceeds to tell the man the Parable of the Rich Fool. This person was materially blessed by God; his land "produced plentifully" (verse 16). As God continued to bless the man, instead of using his increase to further the will of God, all he was interested in was managing his increase and accumulating his growing wealth. So the man builds larger barns in place of the existing ones and starts planning an early retirement. Unbeknownst to him, this was his last night on planet earth. Jesus then closes the story by saying, "So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

So the point of the Parable of the Rich Fool is twofold. First, we are not to devote our lives to the gathering and accumulation of wealth. There is an interesting point made in the parable. God says to the man in the story, "And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" This echoes the thought expressed in [Ecclesiastes 2:18](#) ("I hated all my toil in which I toil under the sun, seeing that I must leave it to the man who will come after me"). You see it all the time in people who are singularly devoted to the accumulation of wealth. What happens to all that wealth when they die? It gets left behind to others who didn't earn it and won't appreciate it. Furthermore, if money is your master, that means God is not ([Matthew 6:24](#)).

The second point of the Parable of the Rich Fool is the fact that we are not blessed by God to hoard our wealth to ourselves. We are blessed to be a blessing in the lives of others, and we are blessed to build the kingdom of God. The Bible says if our riches increase, we are not to set our hearts upon them ([Psalm 62:10](#)). The Bible also says there is one who gives freely and grows all the richer ([Proverbs 11:24](#)). Finally, the Bible says we are to honor God with the first fruits of our increase ([Proverbs 3:9-10](#)). The point is clear; if we honor God with what He has given us, He will bless with more so that we can honor Him with more. There is a passage in 2 Corinthians that summarizes this aptly ([2 Corinthians 9:6-15](#)). In that passage Paul says, "And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that having all contentment in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work." We are blessed by God, so we can in turn "abound in every good work" and be a blessing in the lives of others. So, if God has blessed you with material wealth "set not your heart on it" and "be rich toward God." That is the message of the Parable of the Rich Fool.

- GotQuestions.org

Explanation:

In His goodness, God has chosen to share the good things of creation with mankind. As the Creator of all, He is free to disperse goods in whatever way He wills. In so doing, God requires us to make use of His resources in a way that is pleasing to Him. Many of the resources He gives us are represented by money, a medium of exchange that allows us to save, invest, and share the goods and services the Lord provides. Money enables people to secure for themselves the necessities and goods of life. It also serves as a tool for helping others in their times of need. However, as with everything else in this fallen world we can sinfully misuse money. The Bible frequently warns against the sin of greed and wastefulness. A biblical call to stewardship involves wisely managing the good things God has given us... Jesus taught about money and stewardship more than almost any other subject during His earthly ministry. Clearly, there are eternal implications for what we do with what God has given us in the present...

The Bible reveals a general theology of money and stewardship. It gives us a general theory of economics and the ethics of financial management. The Old and New Testaments set out broad principles to help us better understand how we are to make wise applications in specific situations. God calls us to be faithful in what He gives us—working honestly and diligently to gain wealth, saving judiciously, investing wisely, giving cheerfully and generously to the work of ministry in the kingdom of God, supporting the poor and needy, paying taxes, and securing an inheritance for our children.

Thanksgiving and contentment are two of the most important guiding principles of godly giving and stewardship of wealth in this world. The God who liberally gives us all things to enjoy calls believers to return a tithe to God—to give a portion of our income to the work of the church and the gospel. Additionally, Scripture teaches that God delights in joyful givers and gives generously to such for their continued giving (2 Cor. 9:8–11).

In Scripture, wise stewardship of money and possessions is animated by the promise of eternal reward (Heb. 10:34). The eternal inheritance that Christ purchased for believers by His sinless life, atoning death, and resurrection encourages an eternal mind-set about the use of our possessions. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught that the condition of a person's heart will guide his spending. He said: "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19–21). Jesus also taught the parable of the unjust steward (Luke 16:1–13) and singled out the widow who gave her only penny (Mark 12:41–44).

– R.C. Sproul

Application:

In a practical and pragmatic sense, we are reminded throughout the Bible that Christians are not to love or idolize the things that money can buy (1 John 2:15). Instead, true believers are to travel lite through this world, as sojourners who resist the fleshly desires of a fallen and foreign land (1 Peter 2:11). In short, God's eternal Word, will, and ways are clear... **When it comes to the STEWARDSHIP of our treasure, we are to love The treasure-Giver and treasure the love that He gives.**

While the principles and particulars highlighted in the ILLUSTRATION and EXPLANATION (above) are holistic in their instruction, it is important to acknowledge three specific areas of financial or "treasure" STEWARDSHIP: tithes, offerings, and lifestyle responsibilities.

Biblical tithing (the worshipful and joyous act of giving back to God the FIRST tenth of His gifted provisions), is not only mandated throughout the Old Testament (starting BEFORE the Law was established through Moses – cf. Genesis 14:20), it is also called for in the New Testament. To that end, in Matthew 23:23, Jesus emphatically commanded that the self-righteous and hypocritical religious leaders around Him tithe with the right heart. Still, notwithstanding the direct imperative of Christ, tithing remains a culturally controversial subject amongst many Christians. Therefore, to be absolutely clear, **Jesus commanded right-hearted tithing... He said it, that settles it!**

"Tithing is not giving; it is bringing."

- Unknown

I never would have been able to tithe the first million dollars I ever made if I had not tithed my first salary, which was \$1.50 per week.

- John D. Rockefeller

Biblical offerings represent those contributions to God's kingdom work and service that go above and beyond the obedient tithe. While optional and requiring adequate financial margins, God's people are encouraged to regularly and robustly "offer" to help where and when help is truly needed (Galatians 6:2).

Two words of caution are needed here. First, to those who tend to be self-absorbed and insensitive to the needs of others, take 1 John 3:17-18 to heart and into prayer. Second, to those who tend to abuse the love, grace, and sacrificial support of others, STOP IT! 2 Thessalonians 3:10-13 says that if you can work but choose not to, you "shall not eat." God knew and warned... **sometimes, when Christians lack discernment, "helping" actually hurts.**

*Find out how much God has given you
and from it take what you need; the remainder is needed by others.*
Augustine

*“Abundance isn’t God’s provision for me to live in luxury. It’s His provision for
me to help others live. God entrusts me with His money not to build my
kingdom on earth, but to build His kingdom in heaven.”*
Randy Alcorn

Lifestyle responsibilities and the STEWARDSHIP of one’s treasure
come together in and through the financial choices we make. Remember, as
noted above, God’s Word calls for right-hearted tithing, occasional burden-
bearing offerings, and holistic healthiness in all matters financial. To help:

Don’t miss your treasure...	REALIZE you have treasure!
Don’t deny your treasure...	THANK GOD for your treasure!
Don’t hoard your treasure...	SHARE your treasure!
Don’t consume your treasure...	CARE for your treasure!
Don’t spend your treasure...	INVEST your treasure!
Don’t waste your treasure...	WITNESS with your treasure!
Don’t love your treasure...	WORSHIP thru your treasure!

*You show me your checkbook
and I will show you where your heart is.”*
Larry Burkett

*Don’t tell me you’re trusting God
until you trust Him with your pocketbook.*
J. Vernon McGee

CLOSE:

To whom much has been given, much will be required.
Jesus The Christ
(Luke 12:28)

*“The one principle that surrounds everything else is that of
stewardship; that we are the managers of everything that God has
given us. It really comes down to one question, do you trust God, or
have you just been saying you trust God.”*
Larry Burkett

"I will place no value on anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. If anything will advance the interests of that kingdom, it shall be given away or kept only in reference to whether giving or keeping will most promote the glory of him to whom I owe all my hopes in time and eternity."

David Livingstone

"It is not what I do that matters, but what a sovereign God chooses to do through me. God does not want worldly successes, He wants me. He wants my heart in submission to Him. Life is not just a few years to spend on self-indulgence and career advancement. It is a privilege, a responsibility, a stewardship to be lived according to a much higher calling, God's calling. This alone gives true meaning to life."

Elizabeth Dole

For What?

The whole concept of stewardship begins with creation. Creation is celebrated not only in Genesis but throughout Scripture, especially in the Psalms, where Israel celebrated God's ownership of the whole universe. 'The earth is the LORD's and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein' (Ps. 24:1). God is author of all things, the Creator of all things, and the owner of all things. Whatever God makes, He owns. What we own, we own as stewards who have been given gifts from God Himself. God has the ultimate ownership of all of our 'possessions.' He has loaned these things to us and expects us to manage them in a way that will honor and glorify Him."

R.C. Sproul

Giving is more than a responsibility – it is a privilege; more than an act of obedience – it is evidence of our faith.

William Arthur Ward

"The greatest lesson you might ever learn in life is this. It is not about you."

Shannon L. Alder

So What?

Your stewardship has the potential to influence lives, provide hope to others, and make an eternal difference.

“When the church becomes an institution, people are nothing more than volunteers to be recruited. When the church is a movement, our stewardship becomes the unleashing of our God-given gifts, talents, and passions.”

Erwin McManus

All Christians are but God’s stewards. Everything we have is on loan from the Lord, entrusted to us for a while to use in serving Him.

John MacArthur

*“We make a living by what we get,
but we make a life by what we give.”*

Winston Churchill

Now What?

We should never think that once we have given some money and time to the Lord that the rest is ours to do with as we please. All that we have belongs to God, so He should be taken into consideration in everything we do.

Theodore Epp

“Be wise and attend to obeying. Let Christ manage the providing.”

Charles Spurgeon

*Whatever I thankfully receive, as a token of God’s love to me,
I part with contentedly as a token of my love to Him.*

Theophilus Gale

PRAYER

Dear heavenly Father, thank You so much for the Truth and Love of Your Word, will, and ways. Please help us to absorb and apply ALL that You have shared and commanded in the Bible. May our heads be infilled with Your defining Scriptures, for the express purpose of informing, inspecting, and inspiring our sanctified hearts and serving hands.

In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen and Amen

Support Sermon:

“Sticker-Shock Stewardship”

Luke 14:28

April 6, 2014

Sermon Series: Defining Definitive Definitions

(* See also the sermon: *“Tithing”* in the same series. *)