

Marriage, Mistakes & Money

by Jim Cymbala

Jim Cymbala's sermon emphasizes the importance of marriage, the inevitability of mistakes, and the role of money in relationships from a Christian perspective.

Duration: 59:29

Topics: "Marriage"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the parable of the dishonest manager from Luke 16:1-13. The manager is accused of wasting his master's possessions and is about to lose his job. Knowing he has limited time, the manager shrewdly reduces the debts of his master's debtors, gaining favor with them. Jesus commends the manager's shrewdness and uses this parable to teach the importance of using worldly wealth wisely and being trustworthy in handling it. The preacher emphasizes the need for believers to diligently seek God and put effort into spiritual matters, just as people do in worldly pursuits.

Transcript

Open your Bibles. I want everyone to listen. We're going to go on a little pastor's chat in my office.

But we're going to begin by reading Luke 16. But we won't get to the text for a while because the name of this message is Marriage, Mistakes and Money. Boy, it's good already and I haven't begun.

They're totally disjointed. So, I want you to just listen. Follow me.

Luke 16. Matthew, Mark, Luke. Third book in the New Testament.

Everyone have it? Luke 16. Jesus told his disciples. Here comes a parable now.

Some think it's the hardest parable of all to decipher. There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. You got it? So, he called him in and asked him.

What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management because you can no longer be manager any longer. Because you cannot be manager any longer. The manager said to himself.

What shall I do? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig. Probably means to be a farmer.

And I'm ashamed to beg. I know what I'll do. So that when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.

So, he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first. How much do you owe my master? 800 gallons of olive oil, he replied.

The manager told him. Take your bill. Sit down quickly.

Make it 400. Look up here. He saved 50% of what the man owed.

Illegally. Illegally. But he still had the power to do it.

Then he asked the second. How much do you owe? Verse 7. A thousand bushels of wheat, he replied. He told him.

Take your bill and make it 800. Saved 20%. The master commended the dishonest manager.

Because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world, Jesus said, are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it, the money, is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

Whoever can be trusted with very little money, 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, our Lord taught.

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. By the way, the Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus.

Because you know what they use religion for? Make a buck. They were legalists, but they loved money. They would strain at a gnat, but swallow a camel, and they loved money.

Most people who are into legalism, are into money. They love money. Now, I've decided that periodically, I have to have a different kind of sermon.

There are different kinds of messages that a preacher can preach. There's expository messages, where you take a paragraph of the Bible. Some ministers preach through the Bible that way.

My friend Raul Reis is always doing that on the radio at his church. And they go through book by book, paragraph by paragraph. They explain what the word means.

Then there's topical sermons, where you take a theme like the Holy Spirit, or let's say the word hope. And you'll search the Bible out, and you'll preach on that theme of hope. Then there's topical sermons, when it comes to current events, trying to figure out something.

What Bible application can we make for something going on in society today. But Carol and I have been doing this for more than 30 years. And I've talked to a lot of people in my office.

And I've decided that sometimes I need to just shut everything down. And I'll get to the text. But I need to talk to you about a couple subjects that I think are important to talk about, which I don't feel I should make

a sermon about any one of them.

So I'm going to combine them, and it's going to be a pastoral talk. You'll see verses. But I'm just going to talk to you as if you were in my office, and we were chatting.

And I wasn't bound by, here's the text, and now I'm going to make my second point. I would open my heart, especially to younger people who are single, because I want to talk about marriage. And I would talk to you, counsel you.

This is needed. The pastors know it is, because we run into recurrent problems. Well, marriage, mistakes, and money.

Let's start with marriage. The first thing, and I want all the single people to know here, is this verse that's found in Proverbs. Look at it up here.

He that finds a wife finds a good thing. In the NIV, Proverbs 18.22, look at it. Let's read it out loud together.

He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord. Now, being single is good. Being single is in the Bible.

Paul was single and had the gift of celibacy, which we'll get to in a second. But, let's focus on single people and getting married. The Bible says that marriage is a joy.

That when you get married, when you fall in love with somebody in the faith, I'm not talking about going outside the faith, that would violate Scripture. Don't be unequally yoked. But when you get married in the faith, it's a blessed thing.

It's a good thing. And the Bible says that when you find that spouse, that husband or that wife, you are receiving favor from the Lord. Now, why is it such a good thing? Why is marriage a good thing? Well, first of all, you have the joy and the blessing of companionship.

You have somebody to share your life with. So that when you rejoice over something, you can rejoice with another person. You're not alone.

When you have problems, the other person, if they're a good spouse, can share the problems with you. Brothers and sisters, when you're single and you get old, life can be very lonely. So there is a blessing, obviously, that someone gets married, they find a good thing.

Marriage is also a blessing and is a good thing and is favor from the Lord because it's a source of strength. A two threaded rope is stronger than a single threaded rope. To have somebody that you can talk to and pray with and for, to have someone help you bear your burdens, which we all have, to have somebody who can compliment you, makes you more effective in life.

You see, Chevy Cedeno has structural weaknesses in his life. I have structural weaknesses in my life. And Chevy and I aren't alone in this auditorium.

You have areas where you're not so hot either. How many are awake enough to recognize that, right? Come on, wave your hand, let me see because some are saying I'm perfect, I guess. When God gives you a spouse, He gives you someone who compliments you.

My wife is strong in areas where I am weak. I hope I'm strong in some areas where she needs help. I married a better person than she married.

But, nevertheless, we need each other. I am not whole without my wife. Because when you're married, you become one and God works it out so that you compliment each other.

It's amazing how smart some people can be in one area and in another area they're dense. But then, there's another person to help you. So, that you see differences between you and your spouse, that's supposed to be that way.

That you see weaknesses, well, everybody has them. So, there's the blessing of being strengthened by being complimented. Not C-O-M-P-L-I M-E-N-T-E-D Not complimented like that's a pretty blouse or that was good the way you did that.

But complimented C-O-M-P-L-E M-E-N-T-E-D Which means that the person you're married to compliments you and makes the two of you dynamic in the Lord. Stronger in the Lord. This is the blessing of marriage.

We had a time in the Christian church where marriage alone was extolled. Now we're coming into a time because of all the single people where there's all books about the joy of being single. And some people it's God's will for them to be single.

We'll get to that in a second. But let's not kid ourselves. To find a good spouse and to be married is a good thing.

It's a blessed thing. There's a third reason. Much earthier and more practical why it's good to get married.

Because a lot of people can't control themselves sexually. That's not my opinion. That's what the Bible says.

Look at the verse. First Corinthians 7 starting chapter 7 verse 1. Now for the matters you wrote about it is good for a man not to marry. It's a fine thing.

It's proper to a man to stay single if he can. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. Look at the next verse.

The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband in the same way the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. And before I go back to single people that tells us brothers and sisters that if anybody here who's married uses sex in the bed as a tool to get back at somebody you are on very very very dangerous ground.

You not only sin against your spouse, you sin against God and you could be playing with fire and whatever explosion happens, you'll be held responsible partially for it because that's the way we're made. So you can talk things out and all of that but sex is never to be used as a tool to okay you wanna have your way and talk like that then fine. You know sleep in the other room.

You don't do that. Christians don't do that. The world does that.

Christians don't do that. Let me say amen. Because notice Paul's allowance inspired by the Holy Spirit he said it's fine for a person to be single but because of the immorality that is so prevalent.

Why did he say trust God anyway? Because you don't just trust God if you have a natural sexual urge you need to get married. In fact, the verse that I looked at in Proverbs, he that finds a wife, finds a good thing what does the word find imply? That somebody was searching. It's not wrong to search for a spouse.

Don't go computer dating. But it's not wrong to search because you know some people are so mystical about this. They think that to find somebody you just, you know, you just bump in and there's a glow over their head and when you shake their hand a little buzzer goes off in your hand.

It's not like that. Brothers and sisters you have to know your limitations because Christians aren't allowed to fornicate. You can't have sex outside marriage.

And pornography and the internet is not an option. That's filthy mindedness. So, we can't live like the world.

We're to be pure vessels for the Lord and not everybody has the gift of self control like Paul had. So, Paul gives very practical advice. If you can't control yourself, find a wife which probably implies search for one.

Make friends among Christians in the opposite sex. See what happens. See what clicks.

We'll get to that in a moment. But this is important because we got to live different than the world. And there's so many temptations out there.

You can't even watch the advertisements on TV today. Forget the programs. How about the advertisements? They're selling sex.

They're not selling cars. They're selling sex. Well, praise God, I'm just going to trust the Lord.

Well, you be very careful with that because you might not be thinking according to the mind of the spirit. Look at the next passage. Same chapter.

Verse 8. Now to the unmarried and the widows I say, it is good for them to stay unmarried as I am. But, if they cannot control themselves, they should marry for it is better to marry, read it with me, than to marry. So all this idea of, well, I don't care what I feel, I'm just going to trust the Lord.

Well, that flies in the face of that verse. The Bible is very practical. There's a sex drive that people have.

And unless you're called to singleness and unless you have that special gift of self-control, you better be looking for a spouse because it's better to marry than to burn with passion. Now, Paul says that when you marry, you got a lot of burdens that you don't have when you're single. You have children, you have grandchildren, you have bills to pay, you have all kinds of things.

You got to look out for your mate. You got to know what she's doing and where she needs your help and where you can cooperate and where you can give yourself because love always gives. Love always gives.

God so loved the world that He gave. Show someone who doesn't give and I'll show you someone not in love. We all do it imperfectly but love gives.

So this is very practical teaching. Why don't more people, single people, get married? I want to tell you from my 30 some years of counseling, three kinds of people who have trouble getting married or trouble developing relationships or trouble even being open to marriage even though they should be open to marriage because they're not called to singleness. Number one and it's especially men.

Many men cannot get involved in a relationship because they're just too immature and selfish. Same exact thing happened this morning. All the women started saying Amen.

I want you to listen. In other words, many young men and middle-aged guys that never married, they're not about to give up their independence and they don't want to share and pay the bills for no one know how. So what happens is brothers and sisters they end up living in a cocoon.

Now many times you can be 45, 40 years old, 35 and still be 14 or 15 years old and this goes for women too and then you can end up very lonely later on in life. Very lonely. Very lonely and other problems can develop as we just referred to.

But some men just are too cheap and too selfish. Listen. Listen.

It's not jokes. Too cheap and too selfish and too immature. They're just not gonna make a commitment that involves any sharing or taking on a responsibility.

Maybe that's in a house, the house they grew up in their father walked out on their mother so they never even had a model of someone who's responsible. They came from a home where the guy just made babies and then left. But that's not for Christians.

That's not an option for us. And men who for whatever reason, what complex fear or whatever of a commitment of responsibility of having a child. You know Michael Archibald helps me in so many different ways.

When we met him he was just a teenager, wasn't he Carol? Now he's married with four children. So he has one more than Carol and I had and I asked Michael how is it with the fourth one? Is that like a big difference? He said no. The big difference is really when you go from two to three.

And we found the same thing. To have two kids is like cute. And when the third one comes along it's like it's like a zoo.

I used to find myself putting dresses on my son. I didn't even know which child I was dressing when they were little. But if you don't want to take on that responsibility and you're immature and selfish self-absorbed kind of person then you're going to have problems.

And in Jesus name I want to say to you, God can help you grow up. To take on responsibility. I cry when I see certain men who I, every my instinct in me tells me they should be dating and should be meeting girls.

We'll get to that in a second. And just they're frozen. Some have questions about their own masculinity.

That comes also from childhood problems and situations. But God is bigger than all of that. He can help us to function as Christian men.

Whichever way God has called us to be. Single or married. The second kind of person who has a problem with that is a person who's very vulnerable and has been hurt.

And is gun-shy. Very insecure. Fear of rejection.

Things have happened. And they go into an immature mode of oh I don't trust any of those men. Those men are all beasts.

And you can meet a man who says the women are bunch of witches and you can't trust them. Why? Because I once knew a woman and she did this to me. So here's what happens.

Brothers and sisters if we're not careful. We have experiences in life. We get hurt.

Who here hasn't been hurt? And you shut all the doors down in your life. You shut all the windows. And you say nobody else will ever come in to hurt me.

You can't live that way. That's not pleasing to Jesus. You have to be open.

You have to be vulnerable. There are people just a few feet here from me who have been hurt big time. If you knew some of their stories you would wonder how they're even together.

But what they have to do is be open to whatever God has for them in the future. You can't shut down and say no I'll never let anybody do that. Because you'll not only close out other people.

You'll close out God. Thirdly there are people who are gonna go nowhere in this situation because they're so self-absorbed and self-righteous and picky that they look and find faults in everybody. Some women just they must think they're the queen of the universe or something.

Because no man is good enough. You know women look in the mirror at yourself. Nobody's a bargain.

None of us are a bargain. You see Pastor Bird up here how Godly he is and he's a blessing. He's got faults.

He's not a bargain. His wife has to endure. And Valeria as angelic as she is.

She has faults. I have faults. Just ask my wife.

If you talk I'll never tell you to talk to you again. Nobody is a bargain. Say it with me.

Nobody is a bargain. Say it again. Nobody is a bargain.

If you think you're God's gift to the world, you're never gonna have a relationship that's gonna be normal and healthy. You are who you are and other people are who they are. And you have to have grace with one another.

But self-absorbed full of themselves people who look down at everyone. Oh that girl she's not my dream girl. That's not my dream girl.

Well your dream girl might not exist on the planet Earth. Brothers and sisters in the name of the Lord you gotta lighten up and not take yourself so serious. Because all there are are folks.

All there are are people. There are no heroes except for Jesus. You get close to anybody and you see frailties left and right.

So no comprehensive study on marriage but I want to just say these things to you because it's important. I want to see especially as we have new areas for fellowship developing restaurant. Brothers and sisters how will you ever develop a relationship guys unless you spend time with people and find out who they are.

You know a lot of people are afraid of if I ask her she'll say no. So she says no go to the next one. What are you gonna do? Come on do I get a hand for that or what? That was a word of wisdom.

It's not the end of the world. Nobody's the end of the world. You just move on.

Get over it. Get past it. And you can't be so full of yourselves that you see rejection any place.

Some people are so full of a rejection complex they're replaying things that happened years decades ago. Just get over it. So he walked out on you or he broke your heart or she broke your heart.

So God works everything together for good to them that love him. You gotta move on. Now mistakes.

Did you know that on that note of lightening up and not taking ourselves so serious look at the word of God from an apostle who grew up with Jesus the half brother of our Lord. We all stumble in what's the first word of that sentence? What is that first person plural that includes who? James. We.

James. James. The apostle who wrote that.

He says we all stumble in many ways. If anyone is never at fault in what he says he is a perfect man able to keep his whole body in check. So listen to what I'm saying now.

Because I want to say something on behalf of myself and the pastors. We all make mistakes. I make the most and I'm the most vulnerable because I talk the most from this microphone.

If I have ever hurt any of you. If I have ever said anything. If I have if we have ever failed you in counseling.

If we have ever done anything to hurt any of you I personally want to say I'm sorry. Because I'm frail. I've stumbled in many ways.

And so do the other pastors. So I want you to take my apology this morning because should my life end I don't want it to be that somebody is holding something against me. I don't read letters that aren't signed.

If they're anonymous I don't read them because if it's not worth signing it's not worth reading. But sometimes I've noticed over the years even the people write once a person was offended by the way one of the pastors prayed. Because people are coming with their own complex issues.

And then I'm frail and we all stumble in many ways. So I want to say don't put your eyes on preachers. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

And be, listen, and be patient with people because if James could say we all stumble in many ways. What in the world is the case for you and I? Notice where we most stumble or where it's the hardest thing to not stumble in. Your mouth.

There are people who live an outwardly moral life but with their mouth they're full of mischief. With their mouth. And James says that's the hardest thing.

If anybody can control their mouth they're a perfect person. Being able to bring everything under control. Notice how universal this problem is of, of, you know when I was younger I thought if someone was a preacher I thought they were like heroes that never made mistakes.

God's man of faith and power. Here he comes. He walks like on the water.

Look at me real close. Trust me. There are no heroes except for Jesus.

And if you look any place else you will be sorely disappointed. Sorely disappointed. Because we're all made of clay.

We have this treasure in earth and vessels. Look at this next verse. Who can say I have kept my heart pure.

I am clean without sin. Who could say that? Anybody here want to stand up and say Pastor Simba since the day I was born I've kept my heart pure and I've never sinned in my whole life. If you do sin we will have you ushered out to a mental asylum so they can examine you.

How many know we've all messed up. Come on. Lift up your hand.

Confession. Come on. Wave your hand at me.

And did God throw you away? What did he do? He had mercy. How many can say looking back on your mess ups, God had mercy. Come on.

Wave your hand at me again because God sees it that we're rejoicing in his mercy. So brothers and sisters, if God had mercy and he's perfectly holy with me, how awful is it to be uptight and judgmental of other people. In other words who are you to judge anybody? Who am I to give my opinion about everyone? That's not discernment.

The gift of criticism is not a gift of the spirit. It's just the flesh. It's pride.

And many people because of their insecurity feel that by putting everyone else down they elevate themselves. That's a very sick way to go through life. How many want to be merciful to other people so God can be merciful to us.

Here's one of the most humorous parts of the Bible and I'll close with this and then just finish about money. We did marriage. Here's mistakes.

Look at this one. Ecclesiastes. There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.

Amen? Listen. Do not pay attention to every word people say or you may hear your servant cursing you. For you know in your heart that many times you yourself have cursed others.

You know what that means? It means don't take everything you hear and people so serious and remember that whatever you see other people do wrong, you've done it yourself. Isn't that amazing? One of the great deceptions in us is that I can get righteous indignation. It happened to me a few weeks ago.

I learned of something and I said, I don't know how that person could do that and as I was thinking that the Lord rebuked me and said, you did it two weeks ago. How many get what I'm talking about? Just say

amen. So don't and this is another good truth.

Don't listen to what people say. My wife and I were talking about someone that's happened in my family. In this case it was in her family here concerned because somebody was acting in a very hateful mean way that could hurt other people.

Do you know the only way that you can deal with people who act nasty all the time? My father-in-law had this gift. You have to turn them off. You can't listen to what everyone says or it'll drive you nuts.

There are certain people you just, look when my dad was drinking, my mom's here, yes. When my dad was drinking and he would really get one on, he would call me every four-letter word I'd ever heard in the park. I never took that serious when he was sober.

I never remembered it because he was drinking. Some people are like drinking all the time. How many get what I'm talking about? So to take them serious you have to know when to just say she's gonna be that way.

He's gonna be that way. But you're not gonna get me with that. I'm gonna keep my eyes on Jesus.

I'm gonna focus on the Lord. Because if you take everybody serious, you will go crazy. And that reminds us of one other thing.

How we can be deceived, as I said, by practicing things that we judge others on and we get so upset that they do it, you know. Don't listen, you might hear your servant cursing you and you know that's true because you might have cursed your servant, Ecclesiastes is saying. I've noticed this about family, about color, race and about islands.

And it's always troubled me. I guess I can't stand it. I've developed, I hope, a righteous indignation toward it.

Isn't it remarkable that a family can have members who do the worst things and be the worst examples of a Christian. They'll never say a word about it. But let anybody even drop a piece of paper and they attack.

How many know what I'm talking about? You know why? That's the pride of family. The pride of family. It's a double standard that God doesn't like.

If something's wrong, it's wrong. In other words, you know, how could you say that? Your own son, he robbed a bank. Well, he just had a bad day when he did that.

He had bacon. It was not good that morning. It affected him, and he went off and he robbed a bank.

You know, always excuses. But for other people, no excuses. Just write at them.

Oh, I see something in that person. Look in the mirror. What do you see in yourself? We can do that with race.

You know, if a white person does it, it's fine. But let someone who's another race do it. What did that person do that for? Or the black community, or black person say, you know, look at that terrible crime, and yet a black person can do it.

No, that's none of your business. You just leave that alone. That's wrong.

If something's wrong, it's wrong. Doesn't matter if your neighbor does it, or President Bush, or anybody. It's wrong.

And you also have that with people from Trinidad, or America, or Jamaica, or West Indian, or whatever. If it's from their country, they turn their eye and won't say a word. But let somebody else do it, and they're coming like a rocket ship at you.

We all stumble in many ways. And you know what's the best attitude to have? It's just chill. That's not in the Bible, but receive it today.

How many want to just chill and keep your eyes on your own self? You know, work out your own, who's salvation? And it'll keep you busy. I got very discouraged with myself this week. Very discouraged.

Just for a number of reasons. I was alone, and I just, when I think of all my faults, and when I think of how little spiritual growth, and all that I know in my head, and you just, if you really just look at yourself, who can you, what can you say but, oh God, have mercy on me, help me. How many need God's mercy and help every day? Who has time to look at other people? Lastly, why is this parable so weird, that the master commends a dishonest servant? He has a manager who's managing his money.

The manager gets caught cheating. So he says, in three days, you're toast. You get a pink slip on Friday.

Let's say it's Tuesday. So the guy knows he has three days with the authority of being a manager. And he thinks to himself, wow, I lose my salary, my benefits, everything's gone as of Friday.

What am I gonna do? I can't go and farm, because I'm too weak. I could never dig with a hoe and do all of that. Number two, I'm too proud to beg.

I'm not gonna go on the street corner to beg for a living. And this is what the Greek actually indicates. It's like a light bulb went on.

He went, I know what I'll do. I have an idea. So he goes over to somebody and he says, how much do you owe my boss? Oh, I owe a hundred gallons of oil.

No, you don't. You only owe fifty. Who said? I said.

I have that authority. You just got reduction. Fifty percent discount.

We're running a big sale this week. And then he goes to another person and he goes, how much do you owe my boss? The Lord. Small I. Oh, I owe a hundred pounds of wheat.

No, you don't. You only owe eighty. Change the bill.

He figured, when I get terminated on Friday, I'm gonna have some people saying, come on to my house, come on to my house. You're the guy that saved me fifty gallons of oil. You stay as long as you want.

Come on, honey. Put the pernil on and we're gonna have a meal here. And the Bible says that the Master praised the dishonest servant because of his shrewdness and his foresight.

He wasn't applauding his dishonesty. That was dishonest what he did. But then he laid down, Jesus, a principle which should make all of us quiet.

But it's true. Jesus said it. Look at it here.

And then we'll close. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. Who are the people of the light? Christians.

Who are the people of the world? The people who aren't Christians. They are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind. Some translations have their own people.

Some translations have their own things. That's Luke 16, 8b, the second half of the verse. What does that mean? It means that, and it's true for a lot of us here, to make money? Oh, to make money? To put away money for a house? To get an apartment that's nicer? Oh, are you kidding? Thought, analysis, planning to fix up the house? To get the money to fix up the house? A second job? A third job? To invest portfolios? CDs? IRAs? Checking the interest? The stock market? Men are so smart in getting ahead in this world, but the children of light, when it comes to spiritual things, they don't put one-tenth the effort into it.

Because they have this whole thing of, well, the Lord's going to do it, you know, it's just going to come. They forget that verse, that He's the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. So, when it comes to making war, making strategies, weapons, imagine what human beings have done.

We have weapons now that we can shoot and control, and now they're soon going to have a weapon that you can shoot from hundreds of miles away, and it can stop in mid-air, and through computers you can actually look at what's down below and then decide where you want to send it, and boom, it'll hit it within an inch. They got planes now over Baghdad that are able to pick up who's talking in a car. Oh, to get ahead for cancer research, to get ahead for all the things of this world, especially making money.

How smart people are. I have relatives that are so smart in making money, and none of their kids are serving God. But making money, getting ahead? Oh, they can get ahead.

Oh, are they smart? They're fools, but they're smart. And Jesus said, this is a terrible thing. The children of this world are wiser when it comes to things of this world than people growing in the Lord, learning more of your Bible, learning more of your Bible.

I gotta know my Bible. Now, God, give me a plan. Give me a strategy.

Let me attack this like I would if I want to buy a new dress or a new suit or a new car. Oh, I know people who comparison shop. They won't buy a refrigerator.

It'll take them three weeks to buy a refrigerator. They gotta check everything. Internet, stores, talking to friends, calling, what kind of refrigerator do you have? And Jesus said, but when it comes to the children of light, it's just like, not like a shrewd manager with foresight, thinking ahead.

So you know what Jesus told us to do? This is just for the members of the church. If you're visiting, you're just listening in to a pastoral talk. Jesus said, the way you spend this money, you can do something with it, just like that shrewd manager.

Look up at the screen. Look at the next verse. What did Jesus say? I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves so that when it, what's it? The money, it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

So look at me, everyone. Are you using your money to do anything more than just feed your face and your desires and pay your bills? Are you using your money to invest in anything bigger than your own life? Because just like the shrewd manager said, no, I'll use my money. It won't be my money, but I'll do a little trick here so that when I lose my job, I'm going to have a golden parachute.

I'm going to have a good landing. And Jesus said, that's how you should use your money. Now, let me just tell you something.

When you get to heaven, some of you are going to have Haitian children run up to you, and they're going to hug you. You won't know them. But you see, we take your money that you give, and we send it partially to Haiti, don't we pastors? And that's how Elsie feeds the children.

So these children, oh, you don't know them, but they'll run up to you, and they're going to hug on your neck. And they're going to kiss you, and they'll say, thank you for giving to the Lord. And kids from the Dominican Republic, and people that have gotten saved in Peru, and in Africa, and we're sending thousands of dollars to Cambodia that we raised in a Tuesday night prayer meeting after we saw that.

Now, I hold in my hands what I would call a prophetic letter. Why it's prophetic is, only God knew what I was preaching on this morning, and I didn't go through all my mail, but I opened this letter from a woman in our church. And this is the best illustration I could give you.

Dear Pastor Simbala, God bless you. I just want to share my joy and my blessings with you. Oh, by the way, before I read this, how many remember at Christmas time when we filled all those boxes up and they went to Uganda? Remember Operation Christmas Child? Franklin Graham, and Franklin Graham's going to be preaching here this summer.

He just contacted us. He's going to come and minister. I received a letter, Pastor Simbala, from a 17-year-old girl in Uganda whose name is Charity.

She wrote the letter on behalf of four other children who are orphans, and one of whom received one of my shoeboxes, and they also now have my name. These children are being cared for by a family in the church in Uganda. God has blessed me now with four children who I will one day see in heaven.

Who knows? I may be able to visit them in Uganda someday. Thank God for the opportunity to give. Thank you, Pastor Simbala, for allowing us to respond to such a need.

Maria McKnight, I assume a member of our church. She lives on New York Avenue here. She's got Ugandan children waiting for her.

Who do you have waiting for you? Anybody? You can take this stuff. It won't be worth anything soon, and you can just worry about it, and you can let it be your God. There are some people who make no sacrifices for God, but for money they'll make every kind of sacrifice.

But look at the last verse. Just jump to the last one, Michael. Just look at that last verse, the last sentence.

You cannot serve God without sacrifice and money. No servant can serve two masters. Don't you think this is a prophetic letter? I mean, how could God time that? I never received one of these in my life.

Oh, the Holy Spirit moved on her to write it because he knew I'd be preaching about this, and he said, you know, the guy will need an illustration. Now, let's just go over some things, because we've stepped out, we

pastors. Have we stepped out, Pastor Ware? We've stepped out big time.

Don't know where the money is going to come from, but you know what? Hey, listen, I've never known where anything was going to come from. My wife and I started here with an \$85 offering at the Brooklyn Tabernacle, so if we'll go by offerings, then we'll never do anything. There's a building, 180 Livingston Street, and in the basement they're already framing.

They have 30, 40 people working there every day, but I was told by Brian Petrie that they're already framing. Right, Brian? That's you? They're framing the basement, which means they're putting in the rooms where the youth center's going to be, so we can open it up to kids, 13 through 19, 12 to 18, whatever. Velma Hamilton, former police officer, retired, wonderful sister in the Lord.

She'll be working under Pastor McDonald, and we're going to have a youth center. You know what those kids are going to bring in for money? Zero. But we're going to tell them about Jesus.

So they don't have to end up on crack. A lot of them come from single parent homes, where the mother could be spaced out. So I want to ask everybody here, I don't know how you were brought up, but if your mother was a crackhead and you had no dad in the house and you were 13 going to one of these schools, which is a war zone, what chance would you have? How many of you would be here today if it wasn't for God intervening in your life? So we've got to do that.

What will we get from it? That I can see nothing financially, but you know what? We might get some eternal welcomes. We might have people saying thank you, thank you, thank you. When all this stuff is worthless, we're going to have something that has eternal value, spiritual value.

There's two floors above that, the first and the second floor, and on that there's going to be classrooms. One of the things that's going to happen there every Saturday or every other Saturday, I don't know how Mark and Georgina will begin it, but they'll need your help, we'll need more workers for the Royal Family Kids Camp. So people will come from the social services, they refer to us for those of you visiting, the worst sexually abused kids in the system of New York City.

And we'll have a chance to love them. Maybe their foster parents will come. They've been taken out of their homes where some predator ravished them.

What do you think kind of money do you think those kids will bring? Probably not a dime. So it's a bad investment? No, it's a good investment. Use earthly riches to provide a welcome for yourself.

We're going to have Joni Schwartz is going to have her adult literacy program there. We're going to open it to Buddhists, Hindus, atheists, straight, gay, black, white, brown, yellow, red. You know what we're going to charge him? Nothing.

We're going to teach them first how to read English and they're going to read right from John 3.16 to begin with. For God so loved the world that he gave How many know that's the best way to read? Learn how to read. They're going to get their GED for free, open to the community.

I had breakfast with Senator Schumer last Friday morning in the city. He wants to see if some of this faith-based initiative money that President Bush has made available, which he is supporting, could be sent maybe to help underwrite some of the staffing but they give no money for the building to fix it up. He thinks it's the greatest thing.

He wants to help do whatever he can, but again people are going to come in. We're going to tell them about Jesus and love them and help them for nothing. No charge.

No fee. Full page in the Daily News. You want to learn how to read? Just come to 180 Livingston Street.

We'll teach you. The only thing is you're going to learn about Jesus. You don't have to become a Christian.

We'll still respect you, but you're going to learn. You're going to be surrounded by Jesus in the morning, Jesus at noon, Jesus in the evening time too, right? Let's put our hands together and thank God for that opportunity. Listen.

Carol, if you'd play. We're going to have English as a second language and now when we move the children out of downstairs and the cafeteria gets open, not only will you be able to fellowship more, but you know what that's going to mean? When we get this space done, we haven't been doing it now. We should be doing it, but we can't.

We don't have the space. We're going to send buses to the family shelters and vans and we're going to bring children in, mostly with single parents, many of whom are spaced out on one thing or another and we're going to bring children in and they're going to be loved and helped and they're going to have nothing to put in the offering. They live in a shelter.

How would they have money? No, God's going to supply the money somehow. And we're going to invest in something better than the stock market. We're going to invest in eternity.

How many want to be a part of that and make your money count? Come on, just lift up your hand. You want your money to count? Look, what God has given you is soon going to have no value. When Jesus comes or when you die, you know, if Saddam Hussein is dead or alive, they don't know.

But if he ends up dead through this process, the minute he dies, now or later, however, of old age, however, all the money that he has will be worth exactly nothing. But what he did with his money, same for our president, same for you, same for me, we can invest it in something. Would you close your eyes with me? Lord, many times we have a service and we make an altar call for people to give their lives to Christ or to surrender their lives to you.

We ask you today to lay hold of our wallets and our money. We can't serve God and money. You told us in your word to use money to gain friends for ourselves, waiting for us in eternity.

You taught us that if we don't use money right, how will you trust us with really valuable things? If we're unfaithful in little, we're going to be unfaithful in much. So now, Lord, this is more searching than lifting our hands or saying hallelujah. That comes easy to a lot of us.

But this is Mission Sunday, Lord, and you know we've made these \$40 pledges. We made it low, Lord. I felt you laid that on my heart so that everybody could be involved.

I thought, Lord, that \$10 sacrifice every week would not be exorbitant. But we need help, Lord. It's all being monitored by other people now.

Audited. We're being audited, Lord. We want to show people that we are investing and giving in something bigger than ourselves.

We don't care about brick and mortar. We thank you for this building, but this building is going to burn up one day. It's what happens in the building that matters, Lord.

It's human beings that we want to invest in. Now, Lord, maybe some have gotten behind on not making their pledges. Others might be visiting, and they could give \$4,000 today, not \$40.

You know all things. You know what we have. But, Lord, we do want to invest.

This letter from the sister in our church is like a letter from you. She has children in Uganda waiting to hug her because of a Christmas box. Oh, how wonderful your plan is.

So, Lord, the choir's going to sing and praise you and give one last song of blessing to the congregation. We put off last week, Lord. We have a beautiful Sunday today.

Weep over this place, Lord. If there's anything more I'm supposed to do or Carol's supposed to do, show us, Lord. If there's anything more the choir can do, show us, Lord.

But all we can do is take offerings and then trust you to bless. I ask you to speak to people around this country, around this world, from the north and the south and the east and the west. You've brought millions upon millions of dollars in.

And now, Lord, you know we're short three, almost four million dollars, three and a half million dollars, whatever it is. You're the God of three dollars. You're the God of thirty dollars.

You're the God of three million dollars. You own the cattle on a thousand hills, Lord. Nothing is big to you.

Nothing's small. Everything's important when it has to do with us and your work. So, bless this offering.

Let the people give intelligently, sacrificially, with the thought of investing. With the thought of investing to bring that day to pass, Lord. Bring that day to pass, Lord.

Let us see the glory of the Lord in that youth center. Let us see the glory of the Lord in Joni's ministry, in Nancy's ministry, with the children, in Mark and Georgina's ministry, for us to educate. We thank you for your truth, and thank you for your mercy.

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