

Money: Servant or Master?

by Shane Idleman

The sermon explores the relationship between money and spirituality, urging believers to view money as a servant rather than a master.

Scripture: 2 Samuel 24:24, Matthew 6:21, Mark 8:36, Luke 12:19, 2 Corinthians 9:7, 1 Timothy 6:6

Topics: "Stewardship", "Wealth Management"

Description

Shane Idleman preaches about the dangers of placing our treasure in material wealth rather than in God, emphasizing that poverty does not equate to spirituality and the 'prosperity gospel' is not the true gospel. He challenges the congregation to recognize the blessings they have and to prioritize a relationship with Christ over financial gain, echoing Abraham Lincoln's call to remember God as the true source of abundance. Idleman delves into the heart issue of money, stressing the importance of stewardship, wise financial decisions, and sacrificial giving as reflections of our true motives and the condition of our hearts.

Transcript

"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:21

Throughout the centuries, the church has watched as the pendulum swung between two thoughts: vows of poverty and the "prosperity gospel." In times past, Christians equated oaths of poverty with deep spiritual maturity; whereas the "prosperity gospel" echoes the opposite...wealth is a sign of God's favor. Both extremes offer a false sense of spirituality and a wrong view of God. Poverty does not necessarily enhance spirituality, and the "prosperity gospel" is not the real gospel. God may prosper us but that is secondary--a relationship with Christ is primary.

America needs a reality check. Thousands of children die quietly in some of the poorest villages on earth every day. Research shows that for the 1.9 billion children in third world countries, almost two in three lack access to clean water; surviving on less than \$2 a day. This is extremely disheartening.

The average, low income family in America is wealthier than millions across our globe. We often fail to realize just how blessed we are. Rather than using our resources to serve, they have become our master. We must recognize God again as the true source of blessing and abundance. On March 30, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued a historic proclamation appointing a National Fast Day. He said, "We have forgotten God, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own."

Lincoln recognized that most Americans credit themselves with their success rather than God. We either worship the god of this world, or the true and living God: "No one 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" (Matthew 6:24).

Consider the following:

1. Money is a heart issue. God does not need our money--money can be a gauge that measures spiritual health. This is no doubt why Jesus taught on stewardship more than any other topic, saying, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21). 1 Timothy 6:6-10 says, "Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs." It all starts here--the love of money is a snare that leads us further and further from God.

2. Wisdom in stewardship is foundational. One definition of stewardship notes that people who have yielded control of their finances to Christ habitually honor Him in their financial decisions and steward resources that He has provided. Budgeting resources and controlled spending is wise stewardship. Do you "need" something or do you simply "want" it? This question is at the heart of good stewardship. Budgeting (good stewardship) is the control valve to spending and to money worship. Budgeting allows you to control your desires rather than allowing your desires to control you. Money loses its power when you give it away and budget its influence.

3. Determine how much to give on a regular basis: "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Sadly, many use this scripture to support minimal giving when it actually promotes the opposite. From my perspective, the New Testament believer isn't "required" to tithe, but they should be a very generous person. Ten percent is a good number...it offers a starting number to budget in. David said, "I will not give the Lord that which costs me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24). Giving to the Lord must cost something--that is true, sacrificial giving. Routine, collective giving (through the church, for example) is a spiritual principle intended to help one another and further God's kingdom. It's a sad reality that the church, in general, does not give as God intended, and has, in fact, given its responsibility to the government.

4. Motive is the key: The Bible refers to a "rich fool" who said, "I shall say to my soul, 'My soul, you have many goods laid up for many years, be contented, eat, drink and be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?' This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:19-21). Having a savings account wasn't the issue, his heart was corrupt. He was a selfish, self-centered man. God judged him for it. Had the man said, "God, I have many goods laid up for many years. What would you like me to do with these resources?" he would have been in the center of God's will. This man's attitude about his money revealed his heart. In the same way, our attitude reveals the condition of our heart: "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

Money can be a wonderful servant but a terrible master! "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36).

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