

“WHO THEN IS THE FAITHFUL AND WISE MANAGER?”

A Biblical Vision for Financial Stewardship

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Session 3:

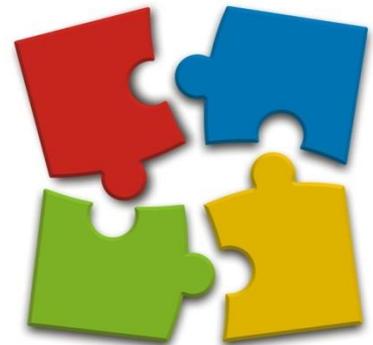
The Ministry of This Service

Part 2

God's Financial Vision

God's expressions of His vision for finances

1. "Well done, good and faithful servant!"
2. Faithful and wise managers in the kingdom
3. What and how God rewards
4. God's description of "normal" in the kingdom of heaven
5. God's greatest decrees
6. Greatness in the kingdom
7. Distinctively godly financial management



Summary From Last Week...

God's big picture vision for our finances:

1. Parable of the Talents & The Final Judgment

- Jesus identifies with his “brothers” and has entrusted “talents” (gifts) to his servants for the purpose of caring for their needs. He will return to call his servants to account for whether they pursued His desire in this.

2. Faithful and Wise Manager

- Jesus cares for his “household” and looks for managers who are already pursuing wisdom and faithfulness in providing for their needs. He empowers those who do but punishes those who prioritize their own indulgence.

Summary From Last Week...

God's big picture vision for our finances:

3. Treasures in Heaven

- For those who are faithfully using His “wealth” (gifts) to care for the needy when He comes, Jesus will reward in heaven with even more abundance of “wealth” to continue that faithful stewardship.

Biblical Vision Concept #4:

“Normal” in the Kingdom of Heaven

4. “Normal” in the Kingdom of Heaven

Two Initial Observations

1. Wealth comes from God

- “Both riches and honor come from you” (1 Chr 29:12a)
- “17 Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ 18 You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth” (Dt 8:17-18a)

2. Wealth is distributed unevenly

Logical inference: God distributes wealth unevenly. Why? Isn't it fairer to distribute it evenly?

4. “Normal” in the Kingdom of Heaven

What is God’s “normal” in the kingdom?

“12 For if the readiness is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have. 13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness 14 your abundance at the present time should supply their need, so that their abundance may supply your need, that there may be fairness. 15 As it is written, “Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.”” (2 Cor 8:12-15)

This is a normative statement about the people of God:

- Those with much had no surplus; those with little had no need
- Contrasts sharply with the world (e.g. Rich Fool, Lk 12:13-21)

4. “Normal” in the Kingdom of Heaven

What is God’s “normal” in the kingdom?

God’s Law (Dt 15):

“4 But ***there will be no poor among you***; for the Lord will bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance to possess— 5 if only you will strictly obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all this commandment that I command you today.

7 If among you, one of your brothers should become poor... you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, 8 but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be...

11 For ***there will never cease to be poor in the land***. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.’”

4. “Normal” in the Kingdom of Heaven

Is this really normative?

Old Testament Israel:

“16 This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Gather of it, each one of you, as much as he can eat. You shall each take an omer, according to the number of the persons that each of you has in his tent.’

17 And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. 18 But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack.” (Ex 16:16-18a)

4. “Normal” in the Kingdom of Heaven

Is this really normative?

New Testament Church:

“34 There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold 35 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.” (Acts 4:34-35)

The reason there were no needy among them is because those who were owners of property distributed from their wealth to meet their need.

4. “Normal” in the Kingdom of Heaven

Key Points:

- Wealth comes from God, who intentionally distributes it unevenly, resulting in poor and wealthy.
- God intends for the poor to have no lack and for the wealthy to have no excess.
- Thus, some of the wealth God distributes to certain people is not actually for them but is intended for others.
 - Like the servants in the Parable of the Talents, God may have entrusted resources to us that He does not intend for us.
 - “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required” (Lk 12:48)
- Givings are accepted according to what a person has.

4. “Normal” in the Kingdom of Heaven

Randy Alcorn, “Money, Possessions & Eternity”

“God distributes wealth unevenly, not because he loves some of his children more than others, but so his children can distribute it to their brothers and sisters on his behalf. He doesn’t want us to have too little or too much (Proverbs 30:8-9). When those with too much give to those with too little, two problems are solved. When they don’t, two problems are perpetuated.” (page 213)

- God distributes wealth unevenly so we can redistribute it fairly
 - “The whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.” (Eph 4:16b)
- This protects against love of money and the strain of need.

4. “Normal” in the Kingdom of Heaven

Discussion:

1. Anything interesting?
2. Anything confusing?
3. Anything to add?

Biblical Vision Concept #5:

God's Greatest Decrees

5. God's Greatest Decrees

What is God's greatest desire for us?

35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.
36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37
And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all
your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This
is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it:
You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two
commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets." (Mt
22:35-40)

"So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest
of these is love." (1 Cor 13:13)

5. God's Greatest Decrees

Love

- The greatest commands are to love God and love your neighbour *as you love yourself*
- Love expresses itself through serving one another
 - “13 For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but **through love serve one another**. 14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Gal 5:13-14)
 - “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Gal 6:2)
- Possessions are simply one form of resource used by a heart of love to bear one another's burdens.
 - “But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?” (1 Jn 3:17)

5. God's Greatest Decrees

Love must be at the heart of giving

“If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.” (1 Cor 13:3)

“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
(2 Cor 9:7)

- God loves cheerful givers. Because of this:
 - Each one must give as he has decided in his heart
 - Each one must not give reluctantly or under compulsion

Biblical Vision Concept #6:

Greatness in the Kingdom

6. Greatness in the Kingdom

Who will be considered “great” in heaven?

- This is significant because it communicates the highest values of the kingdom of heaven, as set by the King of heaven.
- “25 But Jesus called them to him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mt 20:25-28)
- “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.” (Mk 9:35)

Biblical Vision Concept #7:

Distinctively Godly Financial Management

7. Distinctively Godly Financial Management

Recap on the theme of “loving one another”

- Concept 1 – love and care for Jesus’ “brothers”
- Concept 2 – love and care for Jesus’ “household”
- Concept 3 – love and care for the poor and needy
- Concept 4 – love and care for the people of God
- Concept 5 – love and care for your “neighbour”
- Concept 6 – love and care for anyone (“servant of all”)

Questions: Who should we love? Is there a priority? And what does this have to do with finances?

7. Distinctively Godly Financial Management

The “Especially” Principle

- “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the **household** of faith.” (Gal 6:10)
- “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his **household**, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tm 5:8)

Implications:

1. God wants us to love (“do good” and “provide”) anyone
2. God wants us to have special favour towards our “household”

7. Distinctively Godly Financial Management

Biblical Priority for Family

- “But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tm 5:8)
 - Commonly used to support a high view of this Christian responsibility
 - It is good to seek the best for the family: well-fed and nourished, suitably clothed, a safe and supportive home, broad medical care, relevant and ongoing education, cultivating experiences, enjoyable activities, protection against risks, etc.
- Importance of getting the vision in the right balance

7. Distinctively Godly Financial Management

What makes Christian love distinctive?

- “46 For if you love those who love you, ***what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?*** 47 And if you greet only your brothers, ***what more are you doing than others?*** Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” (Mt 5:46-47)
- “32 If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For ***even sinners love those who love them.*** 33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? ***Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.***” (Lk 6:32-34)
- Why? Why no reward? Why no different?

7. Distinctively Godly Financial Management

What makes Christian love distinctive?

- “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.” (Mt 6:1)
- “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward.” (Mt 6:2)
- Root of worldly love:
 - Conditional love = loving others in order to be loved in return
 - They already have their reward in the returned praise of others.

7. Distinctively Godly Financial Management

What makes Christian love distinctive?

- “43 You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Mt 5:43-45)
 - The world loves its neighbour and hates its enemy.
 - The Father loves both His neighbour and His enemy (with sun, rain)
 - This is what makes Christian love distinctive and inimitable.

7. Distinctively Godly Financial Management

Distinctively Christian love, and distinctively godly financial management, sees a vision beyond the priority to provide for family & loved ones.

- A balanced vision of stewardship doesn't lose sight of the lost world in prioritizing the family.
- This puts both love and financial management in the context of the mission of Christ and His people.
- To what end should I provide for and nurture my household? To help them grow up in the fullness of Christ and to participate with Him in His mission. To grow with Christ means to become engaged with Him in His work.
 - Cycle of evangelism

7. Distinctively Godly Financial Management

Discussion:

1. Anything interesting?
2. Anything confusing?
3. Anything to add?

Recap of the Vision Concepts

Vision Summary

Vision	Purpose of Finances
1. Parable of the Talents	Use God's resources to care for the needs of Jesus' "brothers"
2. Wise & Faithful Manager	Manage God's resources to provide for the needs of God's "household" instead of personal indulgence
3. Treasure in Heaven	Faithfully steward God's treasure to care for the needy; God will entrust much more in heaven for the same purpose
4. Fairness/Equality	God distributes wealth unevenly so that we can redistribute it fairly
5. God's Greatest Decrees	Through love serve one another, as you would have them through love serve you
6. Greatest in the Kingdom	The greatest in the kingdom is servant of all
7. Distinctively Christian Love	Serve your household specially, to nurture them to love their enemies with Christ

Vision Summary

2 Cor 9:8-12

“8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written, “He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.”

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God.

12 For the ministry of this service is not only ***supplying the needs of the saints*** but is also ***overflowing in many thanksgivings to God***. By their approval of this service, ***they will glorify God*** because of your submission that comes from ***your confession of the gospel*** of Christ, and the ***generosity of your contribution*** for them and for all others”

Vision Summary

***“It is far better to be inefficient
in achieving the right goal

than to be very efficient
in achieving the wrong goal.”***

Future Topics

Specific, practical topics to be addressed:

1. Giving
2. Lifestyle
3. Tithes
4. Cash Management
5. Saving & Investing
6. Debt
7. Work & Retirement
8. Other Topics

To request future topics, email: ***joseph.elliottson@gmail.com***