



For millions of believers around the world, faith in Christ and belief in the teachings of the Bible are not only discouraged, but actually dangerous.

**KNOW HIS PERSECUTED.  
KNOW HIS WORD.**

Periodically, Secret Church gatherings are held to engage in an intense six-hour Bible study as we identify with and pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters across the globe.

The objective of Secret Church is for you to pass along what you learn in these gatherings to others, so that you can make disciples of Christ in all nations for God's glory.

**[secrechurch.org](http://secrechurch.org)**

# Program Notes

## TONIGHT'S SCHEDULE

6:00 p.m.	Musical Worship
6:20 p.m.	Teaching Segment 1
7:20 p.m.	Break
7:35 p.m.	Teaching Segment 2
8:35 p.m.	Area Highlight
8:55 p.m.	Break
9:10 p.m.	Teaching Segment 3
10:10 p.m.	Offering/Giving Report
10:20 p.m.	Prayer/Immersion
10:40 p.m.	Break
10:55 p.m.	Teaching Segment 4
11:55 p.m.	Musical Worship
12:00 a.m.	Dismiss

**BOTTLED WATER ONLY** is allowed in the Worship Room. Please do not bring food or other types of beverages into the Worship Room. Beverages will be available in the lobby for attendees during the break time.

**RESTROOMS** are located in the lobby. Additional men's and women's restrooms are located in the Modular Building area outside the lobby to the right as you exit.

**SO AS NOT TO DISTRACT FROM THE STUDY**, please turn all cell phones and pagers to the "silent" or "off" position while in the Worship Room. We realize many parents need to keep in touch with baby sitters, but if you must use your phone during the evening, please go into the lobby before calling.

**BIBLES** are available free of charge in the lobby. If you do not have your personal Bible, please keep the Bible you receive as our gift. David will be teaching from the English Standard Version (ESV).

# Secret Church Resources

## **PAST SECRET CHURCH RESOURCES**

Past Secret Church resources are available for purchase in the lobby before and after the sessions and during the break times. Audio and DVD sets of tonight's session will be available for \$39 in the coming weeks.

## **ONLINE RESOURCES**

Online resources, including free MP3 audio downloads of the teaching sessions, Quicktime (MOV) videos of the teaching sessions, study and prayer guides in Portable Document Format (PDF), and links to persecuted church resources are available at the Secret Church web site, [www.secretchurch.org](http://www.secretchurch.org).

## **SOLID GROUND CHRISTIAN BOOKS**

The recommended reading from tonight's study are available in the lobby through Solid Ground Christian Books during and after Secret Church. For more information, visit [www.solid-ground-books.com](http://www.solid-ground-books.com).

## **RADICAL BY DAVID PLATT**

*Radical - Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream* by David Platt will be available in the lobby before, during and after Secret Church. You can also purchase the book online by visiting [www.radicalthebook.com](http://www.radicalthebook.com).

## **EKKLESIA COFFEE HOUSE**

Ekklesia Coffee House will be selling cups of coffee during the breaks this evening. Whole bean coffee will also be available for purchase. All proceeds from tonight's coffee sales go to translation of Secret Church materials. For more information about Ekklesia Coffee House, visit [www.ekklesiacoffeehouse.com](http://www.ekklesiacoffeehouse.com).

# Beyond These Walls...

We're glad you've decided to attend tonight's Secret Church meeting. But even if nobody showed up, it would still be worth the effort. Actually, this Bible study will hopefully benefit far more people outside this room than those present. Here's why...

Tonight we will be recording the teaching sessions and, in the coming months, these sessions will be transcribed and translated into many different languages, including Spanish, Chinese, Hindi and Arabic. The foreign-language versions of Secret Church will be available online as translations are completed. But that is just the beginning.

Most Christ-followers around the world don't have access to seminaries or Bible colleges. In fact, most parts of the world have no formal Christian teaching at all. Dr. Platt will be leading additional Secret Church studies, creating thirty to forty hours of Bible teaching on the Old and New Testaments, Covenants, Disciple-Making, Bible Study and Teaching and other topics. We will then load all Secret Church teachings onto iPods® for distribution worldwide. These sessions together will comprise a "seminary on a stick"—a mini-course in solid Bible knowledge accessible to anyone.

During the evening we will be taking an offering. All proceeds will directly support persecuted Christians worldwide through both ongoing ministry initiatives, as well as providing Secret Church Bible teaching materials in many native languages. Imagine a house-church leader in Asia or the Middle East, now able to attend hours of Bible teaching classes as he plugs in a video iPod® with Secret Church teaching in his own language. With your help, this is quickly becoming a reality.

# THE GOSPEL, POSSESSIONS, AND PROSPERITY

## Secret Church

### The World Around Us...

#### ■ The Reality of Lostness

- ▶ Over 4.5 billion people in the world today on a road that leads to eternal hell.

*This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering—since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.*

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

*And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 20:15

- ▶ People Groups in the World: 16,351.
  - ✦ 6.8 billion individuals
- ▶ People Groups in the World Still Not Reached with the Gospel: 6,645
  - ✦ 2.75 billion individuals

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.*

*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

Matthew 28:18-20

*After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice,*

*"Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"*

Revelation 7:9-10

#### ■ The Reality of Poverty

- ▶ Today, over 1 billion people live (and die) in desperate poverty (less than \$1 a day).
  - ✦ The people...
    - 700 million in slums.
    - 500 million on the verge of starvation.
    - 93 million beggars.
    - 200 million children exploited for labor.

- ✦ The poverty...
  - Lack of food and water
  - Illiteracy
  - Inadequate medical care
  - Disease
  - Brain damage
- ▶ Close to 2 billion others live on less than \$2 a day.
- ▶ 26,000 children today will die due to either starvation or a preventable disease.
- ▶ We are not inconvenienced by this extreme poverty because those stricken by it are not only poor...they are powerless.
  - ✦ Literally millions of them are dying quietly in relative obscurity.
  - ✦ We can comfortably ignore them in our affluence, pretending like they don't even exist.

*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.*

James 2:14-17

## ■ The Reality of Wealth

- ▶ Incoming...
  - ✦ Low Income, \$825 or less: 37%
  - ✦ Lower Middle Income, \$826 to \$3,255: 38%
  - ✦ Upper Middle Income, \$3,256 to \$10,065: 9%
  - ✦ High Income, \$10,066 or more: 16%
  - ✦ Average annual American Christian household income: \$42,409
    - This in the top 2.5% of the richest people in the world...
- ▶ Outgoing...
  - ✦ North American Christians give an average of 2.5% of their income to the church.
  - ✦ North American churches given an average of 2% of these funds to missions overseas.
  - ✦ For every \$100 a North American Christian makes, we give 5 cents to missions overseas.
- ▶ Meanwhile...

*"Today Christians spend more money on dog food than missions."*

Leonard Ravenhill

- ✦ Americans spend \$40 billion every year on pets.
- ✦ Americans spend \$60 billion every year on weight-loss programs.
- ✦ Churches spend \$10 billion every year on church buildings.

*“In the early 1990s, Americans spent annually twice as much on cut flowers as on overseas Protestant ministries, twice as much on women’s sheer hosiery, one and a half times as much on video games, one and a half times as much on pinball machines, slightly more on the lawn industry, about five times as much on pets, one and a half times as much on skin care, almost one and a half times as much on chewing gum, almost three times as much on swimming pools and accessories, approximately seven times as much on sweets, seventeen times as much on diets and diet-related products, twenty times as much on sports activities, approximately 26 times as much on soft drinks, and a staggering 140 times as much on legalized gambling activities.”*

Craig Blomberg

(Statistics from [generousgiving.org](http://generousgiving.org); [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net); [globalrichlist.com](http://globalrichlist.com); [compassion.net](http://compassion.net))

## The Word Before Us...

*“Listen to no man who has not listened to God.”*

A.W. Tozer

- God’s Word on money is true.

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

- God’s Word on money is thorough.
  - ▶ Over 2300 verses.
  - ▶ More than on faith and prayer.
  - ▶ More than on heaven and hell.

- God’s Word on money is clear.

*“My interactions with people as a pastor, teacher, counselor, and researcher – as well as my observation of my own tendencies – have convinced me that in the Christian community today there is more blindness, rationalization, and unclear thinking about money than anything else.”*

Randy Alcorn

- God’s Word on money is complex.

*Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys.*

Luke 12:33

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*

Hebrews 13:2

- God’s Word on money is redundant at some times.
- God’s Word on money is shocking at other times.
- God’s Word will confront us.

*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*

Hebrews 4:12

- God's Word will comfort us.

*The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.*

Psalm 19:7-11

- God's Word will free us.

*I will run in the way of your commandments when you enlarge my heart!*

Psalm 119:32

- God's Word will guide us.
  - ▶ This journey will not necessarily be easy.

*"I feel pulled in opposite directions over the money issue. Sometimes I want to sell all that I own, join a Christian commune, and live out my days in intentional poverty. At other times, I want to rid myself of guilt and enjoy the fruits of our nations' prosperity. Mostly, I wish I did not have to think about money at all. But I must somehow come to terms with the Bible's very strong statements about money."*

Philip Yancey

- ▶ This journey will most definitely be worth it.

## The Question...

- Are we willing to hear the Word even if it convicts us?
  - ▶ We want to acquire biblical information.
- Are we willing to obey the Word even if it costs us?
  - ▶ We want to experience spiritual transformation.

*But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

James 1:22-25

## The Plan...

- The Gospel
- The Gospel and Possessions
  - ▶ Explanations and Implications
    - ✦ Possessions and the Old Testament People of God
    - ✦ Possessions and Jesus
    - ✦ Possessions and the New Testament People of God
  - ▶ Conclusions
  - ▶ Applications
    - ✦ Submitting
    - ✦ Committing
    - ✦ Working
    - ✦ Living
    - ✦ Giving
    - ✦ Tithing
    - ✦ Helping
    - ✦ Saving
    - ✦ Borrowing
    - ✦ Investing
- The Gospel and Prosperity

## THE GOSPEL

*But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

Romans 3:21-26

The Gospel is the good news that the just and gracious God of the universe has looked upon hopelessly sinful people and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin on the cross and to show His power over sin in the resurrection so that all who have faith in Him will be reconciled to God forever.

### Five Threads of the Gospel

- The Character of God
- The Sinfulness of Man
- The Sufficiency of Christ
- The Necessity of Faith
- The Urgency of Eternity

### The Character of God

- He is our Creator.

*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*

Genesis 1:1

*Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable.*

Isaiah 40:28

- We belong to Him.

*"I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King"*

Isaiah 43:15

- He is our Judge.

*The LORD judges the peoples; judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and according to the integrity that is in me.*

Psalms 7:8

*But the LORD of hosts is exalted in justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy in righteousness.*

Isaiah 5:16

- ▶ We are accountable to Him.

*He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. For God shows no partiality.*

Romans 2:6-11

- He is our Savior.

*I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.*

Isaiah 43:11

- ▶ We need Him.

*But I am the LORD your God from the land of Egypt; you know no God but me, and besides me there is no savior.*

Hosea 13:4

## **The Sinfulness of Man**

- We are morally evil.

*And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done."*

Genesis 8:21

*"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"*

Luke 11:13

- We are spiritually sick.

*But when he heard it, he said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick."*

Matthew 9:12

- We are slaves to sin.

*Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin."*

John 8:34

*Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.*

*For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.*

Romans 6:16-20

*...and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.*  
2 Timothy 2:26

- We are blinded to truth.

*In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*  
2 Corinthians 4:4

*The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.*  
1 Corinthians 2:14

*They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart.*  
Ephesians 4:18

- We are children of wrath.

*...among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.*  
Ephesians 2:3

*You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*  
James 4:4

*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.*  
Romans 5:10

- We are spiritually dead.

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins...*  
Ephesians 2:1

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned--*  
Romans 5:12

*...for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*  
Ephesians 5:14

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*  
Romans 6:23

## The Sufficiency of Christ

- His life displayed the righteousness of God.

*He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.*

1 Peter 2:22

*For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Hebrews 4:15

*Which one of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me?*

John 8:46

- His death satisfied the wrath of God.

*Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.*

Romans 5:9

*For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

2 Corinthians 5:21

- His resurrection demonstrated the power of God.

*For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.*

Colossians 2:9-15

## The Necessity of Faith

- Christ is the basis of our salvation.

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 2:4-7

- Faith is the means of our salvation.

*We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*

Galatians 2:15-16

- ▶ By initial faith in Christ, we are made right before God the Father.

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Romans 5:1

*For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. More than that, we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.*

Romans 5:10-11

- ♦ We experience the new birth.

*Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes.*

*So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."*

John 3:5-8

- God opens our eyes.

*Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

John 3:3

- God changes our heart.

*But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Titus 3:4-7

*...since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...*

1 Peter 1:23

- ◻ He cleanses us.

*I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land.*

*25 I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.*

Ezekiel 36:24-25

- ◻ He indwells us.

*And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

Ezekiel 36:26-27

- God enables our belief.

*No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him.  
And I will raise him up on the last day.*

John 6:44

*“When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying,  
“Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.”*

Acts 11:18

*And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them,  
and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.*

Acts 14:27

*...and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith.*

Acts 15:9

*One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who  
was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.*

Acts 16:14

- By His grace, we turn from our sin and ourselves.

*And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the  
forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”*

Acts 2:38

*Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out,*

Acts 3:19

- By His grace, we trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

*“Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ,  
this Jesus whom you crucified.”*

Acts 2:36

*And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”*

Acts 16:31

*If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God  
raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Romans 10:9

- ♦ This gives us radical confidence.

*In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who  
works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be  
to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,  
and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our  
inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

Ephesians 1:11-14

*I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.*

1 John 5:13-15

- ▶ By continual faith in Christ, we now walk with God as our Friend.

*No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.*

John 15:15

- ♦ We experience a new life.

*But if, in our endeavor to be justified in Christ, we too were found to be sinners, is Christ then a servant of sin? Certainly not! For if I rebuild what I tore down, I prove myself to be a transgressor. For through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness were through the law, then Christ died for no purpose.*

Galatians 2:17-21

*Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

1 John 2:4-6

- ♦ This results in radical obedience.

*And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it."*

Luke 9:23-24

- Works are the evidence of our salvation.

*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder! Do you want to be shown, you foolish person, that faith apart from works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up his son Isaac on the altar? You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by his works; and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness" --and he was called a friend of God. You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*

James 2:14-26

- ▶ Faith creates works.

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

Philippians 2:12-13

- ♦ NOT works fueled by the flesh...

*...yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified.*

Galatians 2:16

- A life of legalism

*O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*

Galatians 3:1-3

- Brings no glory to God.

*For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.*

Romans 4:2

- ♦ Works that are the fruit of faith...

- A life of love

*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

Galatians 5:6

- As we trust God wholeheartedly...

*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.*

John 15:5

- We obey God sacrificially.

*You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you.*

John 15:14-16

- Brings great glory to God.

*By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.*

John 15:8

*To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling and may fulfill every resolve for good and every work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

- ▶ Works complete faith.
  - ♦ God glorifies Himself in salvation that is free.

*“For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”*

John 3:20-21

- ♦ God glorifies Himself in lives that are full.

*In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16

*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*

John 10:10

- The basis (Christ), the means (faith), and the evidence (works) of our salvation are all only possible by the grace of God.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.*

Ephesians 2:8-10

*For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.*

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

*To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.*

Colossians 1:27-29

*“Beware lest even as a Christian, you fall into Satan’s trap! You may have found and come to know God in the Lord Jesus Christ, receiving Him sincerely as your Redeemer, yet if you do not enter into the mystery of godliness and allow God to be in you the origin of His own image, you will seek to be godly by submitting yourself to external rules and regulations and by conforming to behavior patterns imposed upon you by the particular Christian society that you have chosen and in which you hope to be found ‘acceptable.’ You will in this way perpetuate the pagan habit of practicing religion in the energy of the flesh, and in the very pursuit of righteousness commit idolatry in honoring ‘Christianity’ more than Christ!”*

Ian Thomas

- The basis (Christ), the means (faith), and the evidence (works) of our salvation are all ultimately involved in judgment before God.

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

Matthew 7:21

*But the one who endures to the end will be saved.*

Matthew 24:13

*He will render to each one according to his works: to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.*

Romans 2:6-8

*he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.*

Colossians 1:22-23

*Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.*

1 Timothy 4:16

*“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.”*

Acts 26:19-20

*“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

Matthew 25:41-46

## The Urgency of Eternity

- Heaven is a glorious reality for those who trust in Christ.

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”*

John 3:16

*But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.*

Philippians 3:20-21

- Hell is a dreadful reality for those who die without Christ.

*Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Revelation 20:11-15

- The Gospel demands a decision.
  - ▶ Will you turn from Jesus?
    - ✦ Live without Christ now.
    - ✦ Die without Christ forever.
  - ▶ Or will you turn to Jesus?
    - ✦ Die with Christ now.
    - ✦ Live with Christ forever.

*This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be considered worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are also suffering-- since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.*

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10

# THE GOSPEL AND POSSESSIONS

## The Plan...

- Possessions and the Old Testament People of God
- Possessions and Jesus
- Possessions and the New Testament People of God

## The Process...

- Look at individual Scriptures...
  - Explanations
  - Implications
- Look at overall Scripture...
  - Conclusions
    - ✦ The Character of God
    - ✦ The Sinfulness of Man
    - ✦ The Sufficiency of Christ
    - ✦ The Necessity of Faith
    - ✦ The Urgency of Eternity
  - Applications
    - ✦ Submitting
    - ✦ Committing
    - ✦ Working
    - ✦ Living
    - ✦ Giving
    - ✦ Tithing
    - ✦ Helping
    - ✦ Saving
    - ✦ Borrowing
    - ✦ Investing

# Possessions and the Old Testament People of God

## Reminders when Interpreting the Old Testament

- Interpreting Old Testament Narratives...
  - ▶ On a whole, Old Testament narratives ARE NOT...
    - ✦ Allegories filled with special meanings.
    - ✦ Intended primarily to teach moral lessons.
    - ✦ Intended primarily to teach doctrine.
  - ▶ On a whole, Old Testament narratives ARE...
    - ✦ Stories with a specific purpose.
    - ✦ Accounts of what happened, not what should have happened or ought to happen every time.
    - ✦ Selective and incomplete.
  - ▶ Identify theological principles in the Old Testament.
  - ▶ Filter those theological principles through the New Testament.
    - ✦ Does the New Testament add to that principle?
    - ✦ Does the New Testament modify that principle?
- Interpreting Old Testament Law...
  - ▶ We wonder about some laws:

*If a man's hair falls out from his head, he is bald; he is clean.*

Leviticus 13:40

*A woman shall not wear a man's garment, nor shall a man put on a woman's cloak, for whoever does these things is an abomination to the LORD your God.*

Deuteronomy 22:5

- ▶ We violate some laws:

*And the pig because it parts the hoof but does not chew the cud, is unclean for you. Their flesh you shall not eat, and their carcasses you shall not touch.*

Deuteronomy 14:8

*You shall not make any cuts on your body for the dead or tattoo yourselves: I am the LORD.*

Leviticus 19:28

- ▶ We obey some laws:

*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.*

Leviticus 19:18

*"You shall not murder."*

Exodus 20:13

- ▶ So how do we know when to wonder, when to violate, and when to obey?
- ▶ Remember... The Old Testament law is not our Testament law.
  - ✦ The general rule:
    - Unless an Old Testament law is somehow restated or reinforced in the New Testament, it is no longer directly binding on God's people.
    - Laws that ARE NOT reinforced:
      - ◻ The Israelite civil laws.
      - ◻ The Israelite ritual laws.
    - Laws that ARE reinforced:
      - ◻ Laws renewed or restated in the context of the new covenant.

*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*  
Deuteronomy 6:5

*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. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."*  
Matthew 22:37-40

- ▶ Realize... All of the Old Testament law is still the Word of God for us even though it is not still the command of God to us.
- Interpreting Old Testament Prophets...
  - ▶ Old Testament prophets were enforcing and mediating the old covenant.
    - ✦ The prophets' message is unoriginal.
    - ✦ The prophets' message is confrontational.
    - ✦ The prophets' message is completed (about 99%).
  - ▶ Old Testament prophets were God's direct representatives.
  - ▶ Old Testament prophets spoke in oracles.
    - ✦ You have broken the covenant; repent.
      - Idolatry.

*"Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Do not be afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, neither is it in them to do good."*  
Jeremiah 10:5

- Social Justice.

*Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*  
Micah 6:7-8

- Religious Ritualism.

*“What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations-- I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.”*

Isaiah 1:11-13

- ✦ If you don't repent, you will experience judgment.
- ✦ However, you have hope beyond judgment for future restoration.
- Interpreting Old Testament Wisdom Literature...
  - ▶ Difficult to follow the line of thinking.
  - ▶ Difficult to understand literary styles.
  - ▶ Difficult to determine meaning.
  - ▶ Remember... The goal of wisdom literature is to apply the Word to practical living.
  - ▶ Realize... The wisdom books contain insights and guidelines for developing godly character; they are not a collection of universal promises.

*He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.*

Proverbs 22:11

*If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked.*

Proverbs 29:12

- Interpreting Old Testament Poetry...
  - ▶ Old Testament poetry is emotional.
  - ▶ Old Testament poetry is metaphorical.
  - ▶ Old Testament poetry is variable.
- Interpreting the Old Testament...
  - ▶ Look at specific contexts.
  - ▶ Identify eternal content.
  - ▶ When New Testament authors/speakers quote or affirm Old Testament teachings, pay close attention.
  - ▶ When New Testament authors/speakers do not mention Old Testament teachings, give cautious consideration.
    - ✦ Our understanding of possessions is not based on the prayer of Jabez.

*Jabez called upon the God of Israel, saying, “Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from harm so that it might not bring me pain!” And God granted what he asked.*

1 Chronicles 4:10

- ✦ Our understanding of possessions is based on the prayer of Jesus.

*And he said to them, “When you pray, say: “Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.”*

Luke 11:2-4

*And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."*

Luke 22:41-42

## Creation

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." And God said, "Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*

*And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.*

Genesis 1:26-31

- Creation is a reflection of God's goodness.
  - ▶ Material things are created good.
  - ▶ Man is created good.
- Creation is submissive to God's authority.
  - ▶ God owns everything...without exception.
  - ▶ Man owns nothing...not even his own life.
    - ✦ He has reign under God over the material world.

*Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.*

Psalm 8:5-8

- ✦ He has responsibility before God for the material world.

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it.*

Genesis 2:15

- Creation is a recipient of God's generosity.
  - ▶ God gives His image for His people to bear.
  - ▶ God gives good things for His people to enjoy.

## Fall

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.

*Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked.*

*And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.*

Genesis 3:1-7

- Man questions God's goodness.
- Man spurns God's authority.
- Man rejects God's generosity.
  - ▶ God's image is marred in man.
  - ▶ Good things are misused by man.
- Man needs God's redemption.
  - ▶ Man needs grace to ultimately be reconciled to God.
  - ▶ Man needs grace to properly relate to things.

*"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

Genesis 3:15

## Patriarchs

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Genesis 12:1-3

- God blesses His people to accomplish His purpose.
  - ▶ He is forming a people...

*And he brought him outside and said, "Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.*

Genesis 15:5-6

- ▶ In a land...

*And he said to him, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."*

Genesis 15:7

- ▶ With possessions...

*Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen, and male servants and female servants, and gave them to Abraham, and returned Sarah his wife to him. And Abimelech said, "Behold, my land is before you; dwell where it pleases you."*

Genesis 20:14-15

- ▶ For a purpose.

*The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."*

Genesis 18:17-19

- God uses wealth and prosperity to accomplish His purpose.

*And Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, and the man became rich, and gained more and more until he became very wealthy.*

Genesis 26:12-13

*Thus the man increased greatly and had large flocks, female servants and male servants, and camels and donkeys.*

Genesis 30:43

*Thus Israel settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. And they gained possessions in it, and were fruitful and multiplied greatly.*

Genesis 47:27

- God uses famine and pain to accomplish His purpose.

*But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones."*

*Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.*

Genesis 50:19-21

## The Exodus

*And the people of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. A mixed multitude also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds.*

Exodus 12:37-38

- God is faithful to save.
  - ▶ He hears His people in their suffering.

*Then the LORD said, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites."*

Exodus 3:7-8

- ▶ He delivers His people from their slavery.

*All the people of Israel did just as the LORD commanded Moses and Aaron. And on that very day the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.*

Exodus 12:50-51

- God is faithful to bless.
  - ▶ Wealth is intended by God to be used for worship.

*Then Pharaoh called Moses and said, "Go, serve the LORD; your little ones also may go with you; only let your flocks and your herds remain behind." But Moses said, "You must also let us have sacrifices and burnt offerings, that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God. Our livestock also must go with us; not a hoof shall be left behind, for we must take of them to serve the LORD our God, and we do not know with what we must serve the LORD until we arrive there."*

Exodus 10:24-26

*The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus they plundered the Egyptians.*

Exodus 12:35-36

- ▶ Wealth is twisted by man to be used for idolatry.

*When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, "Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him." So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf. And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"*

Exodus 32:1-4

- God is faithful to provide.
  - ▶ God gives His people exactly what they need.

*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." And the people of Israel did so. They gathered, some more, some less. But when they measured it with an omer, whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack. Each of them gathered as much as he could eat.*

Exodus 16:16-18

- ▶ God forbids His people to store excess beyond their need.

*And Moses said to them, "Let no one leave any of it over till the morning." But they did not listen to Moses. Some left part of it till the morning, and it bred worms and stank.*

*And Moses was angry with them.*

Exodus 16:19-20

## The Law

*"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the LORD your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over, to possess it, that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey."*

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."*

Deuteronomy 6:1-5

- God entrusts property and possessions to all His people.

*The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Among these the land shall be divided for inheritance according to the number of names. To a large tribe you shall give a large inheritance, and to a small tribe you shall give a small inheritance; every tribe shall be given its inheritance in proportion to its list. But the land shall be divided by lot. According to the names of the tribes of their fathers they shall inherit. Their inheritance shall be divided according to lot between the larger and the smaller."*

Numbers 26:52-56

- God gives laws to govern His people's use of property and possessions.

*"You shall not steal."*

Exodus 20:15

*"You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's."*

Exodus 20:17

*You shall not pervert justice. You shall not show partiality, and you shall not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and subverts the cause of the righteous.*

Deuteronomy 16:19

*“You shall not move your neighbor’s landmark, which the men of old have set, in the inheritance that you will hold in the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.”*

Deuteronomy 19:14

▶ Laws against interest.

*“If your brother becomes poor and cannot maintain himself with you, you shall support him as though he were a stranger and a sojourner, and he shall live with you. Take no interest from him or profit, but fear your God, that your brother may live beside you. You shall not lend him your money at interest, nor give him your food for profit.*

Leviticus 25:35-37

*“You shall not charge interest on loans to your brother, interest on money, interest on food, interest on anything that is lent for interest.*

Deuteronomy 23:19

▶ Laws regulating rest.

- ♦ The Sabbath: Rest every 7th day.

*“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”*

Exodus 20:8-11

- ♦ The Sabbatical Year: Rest every 7th year.

*“For six years you shall sow your land and gather in its yield, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave the beasts of the field may eat. You shall do likewise with your vineyard, and with your olive orchard.”*

Exodus 23:10-11

*The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying, “Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD. For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits, but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land. The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired servant and the sojourner who lives with you, and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food.”*

Leviticus 25:1-7

- Debts were cancelled.

*“At the end of every seven years you shall grant a release. And this is the manner of the release: every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbor. He shall not exact it of his neighbor, his brother, because the LORD’s release has been proclaimed. Of a foreigner you may exact it, but whatever of yours is with your brother your hand shall release.”*

Deuteronomy 15:1-3

- Servants were freed.

*“If your brother, a Hebrew man or a Hebrew woman, is sold to you, he shall serve you six years, and in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the LORD your God has blessed you, you shall give to him. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today.”*

Deuteronomy 15:12-15

- ♦ The Year of Jubilee: Rejoice after 49 years.

*“You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years. Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land. And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan. That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines. For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you.*

*You may eat the produce of the field.”*

Leviticus 25:8-12

- Designed to acknowledge the holiness of God.

*“The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine. For you are strangers and sojourners with me. And in all the country you possess, you shall allow a redemption of the land.”*

Leviticus 25:23-24

- Designed to support healthy families.

*“If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave: he shall be with you as a hired servant and as a sojourner. He shall serve with you until the year of the jubilee. Then he shall go out from you, he and his children with him, and go back to his own clan and return to the possession of his fathers. For they are my servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves. You shall not rule over him ruthlessly but shall fear your God.”*

Leviticus 25:39-43

- Designed to avoid hopeless poverty.

*“If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich, and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you or to a member of the stranger’s clan, then after he is sold he may be redeemed. One of his brothers may redeem him, or his uncle or his cousin may redeem him, or a close relative from his clan may redeem him. Or if he grows rich he may redeem himself. He shall calculate with his buyer from the year when he sold himself to him until the year of jubilee, and the price of his sale shall vary with the number of years. The time he was with his owner shall be rated as the time of a hired servant. If there are still many years left, he shall pay proportionately for his redemption some of his sale price. If there remain but a few years until the year of jubilee, he shall calculate and pay for his redemption*

*in proportion to his years of service. He shall treat him as a servant hired year by year. He shall not rule ruthlessly over him in your sight. And if he is not redeemed by these means, then he and his children with him shall be released in the year of jubilee. For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants. They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."*

Leviticus 25:47-55

- Designed to promote holistic worship.

*For it is to me that the people of Israel are servants. They are my servants whom I brought out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.*

Leviticus 25:55

- Designed to foreshadow hope in Christ.

*Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land.*

Leviticus 25:9

*And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

- ▶ Laws regarding tithes and offerings.

*"Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the LORD's; it is holy to the LORD."*

Leviticus 27:30

- ♦ Tithes and taxes were given to...
  - Support the priests and Levites.

*"To the Levites I have given every tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service that they do, their service in the tent of meeting, so that the people of Israel do not come near the tent of meeting, lest they bear sin and die. But the Levites shall do the service of the tent of meeting, and they shall bear their iniquity. It shall be a perpetual statute throughout your generations, and among the people of Israel they shall have no inheritance. For the tithe of the people of Israel, which they present as a contribution to the LORD, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance. Therefore I have said of them that they shall have no inheritance among the people of Israel."*

Numbers 18:21-24

- Provide for community celebration.

*“You shall tithe all the yield of your seed that comes from the field year by year. And before the LORD your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and flock, that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always.”*

Deuteronomy 14:22-23

- Help the poor and needy.

*“At the end of every three years you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in the same year and lay it up within your towns. And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.”*

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

- Total tithe: About 23% per year.
- The tithe was only the beginning of their giving...

- ✦ Firstfruit offerings were given to offer the best to the Lord.

*“When you come into the land and plant any kind of tree for food, then you shall regard its fruit as forbidden. Three years it shall be forbidden to you; it must not be eaten. And in the fourth year all its fruit shall be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. But in the fifth year you may eat of its fruit, to increase its yield for you: I am the LORD your God.”*

Leviticus 19:23-25

*You shall keep the Feast of Harvest, of the firstfruits of your labor, of what you sow in the field. You shall keep the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.*

Exodus 23:16

*You shall observe the Feast of Weeks, the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the year's end.*

Exodus 34:22

*Of the first of your dough you shall present a loaf as a contribution; like a contribution from the threshing floor, so shall you present it. Some of the first of your dough you shall give to the LORD as a contribution throughout your generations.*

Numbers 15:20-21

- ✦ Freewill offerings were given to offer the excess to the Lord.

*All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering to the LORD.*

Exodus 35:29

*But you shall seek the place that the LORD your God will choose out of all your tribes to put his name and make his habitation there. There you shall go, and there you shall bring your burnt offerings and your sacrifices, your tithes and the contribution that you present, your vow offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herd and of your flock. And there you shall eat before the LORD your God, and you shall rejoice, you and your households, in all that you undertake, in which the LORD your God has blessed you.*

Deuteronomy 12:5-7

- ✦ Tithes and offerings were...
  - Reminders of God's absolute ownership of all things.
  - Reflections of God's faithful provision for all His people.
  - Reasons to celebrate God's gracious blessing toward all His people.

*And they received from Moses all the contribution that the people of Israel had brought for doing the work on the sanctuary. They still kept bringing him freewill offerings every morning, so that all the craftsmen who were doing every sort of task on the sanctuary came, each from the task that he was doing, and said to Moses, "The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the LORD has commanded us to do." So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, "Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary." So the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.*

Exodus 36:3-7

- ▶ Laws regarding social justice.
  - ✦ Provide for the needy.

*"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God."*

Leviticus 19:9-10

*"But if he is poor and cannot afford so much, then he shall take one male lamb for a guilt offering to be waved, to make atonement for him, and a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and a log of oil; also two turtledoves or two pigeons, whichever he can afford. The one shall be a sin offering and the other a burnt offering."*

Leviticus 14:21-22

- ✦ Protect the needy.

*"You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child."*

Exodus 22:21-22

*"When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."*

Leviticus 19:33-34

- ♦ Avoid partiality.

*“You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.”*

Leviticus 19:15

*“You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness. You shall not fall in with the many to do evil, nor shall you bear witness in a lawsuit, siding with the many, so as to pervert justice, nor shall you be partial to a poor man in his lawsuit.”*

Exodus 23:1-3

- ♦ Eliminate poverty.

*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--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.*

Deuteronomy 15:4-5

*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.’*

Deuteronomy 15:11

- God told His people to work.

- ▶ Spiritual work...

*You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

Deuteronomy 6:5-9

- ▶ Physical work...

*You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, because for this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake.*

Deuteronomy 15:10

- God gave His people wealth.

*“Take care lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping his commandments and his rules and his statutes, which I command you today, lest, when you have eaten and are full and have built good houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks multiply and your silver and gold is multiplied and all that you have is multiplied, then your heart be lifted up, and you forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrifying wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water, who brought you water out of the flinty rock, who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers*

*did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end. Beware lest you say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day. And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish, because you would not obey the voice of the LORD your God."*

Deuteronomy 8:11-20

- ▶ According to His grace.

*"Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people."*

Deuteronomy 9:6

- ▶ To advance His glory.

*"And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your livestock, and you shall eat and be full. Take care lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them; then the anger of the LORD will be kindled against you, and he will shut up the heavens, so that there will be no rain, and the land will yield no fruit, and you will perish quickly off the good land that the LORD is giving you."*

Deuteronomy 11:13-17

*See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?*

Deuteronomy 4:5-8

## **Kings in Israel's History**

*The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up. The LORD makes poor and makes rich; he brings low and he exalts. He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honor. For the pillars of the earth are the LORD's, and on them he has set the world.*

1 Samuel 2:6-8

- The purpose of wealth...
  - ▶ To build a place.

*Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. I have indeed built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in forever." Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. And he said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to David my father, saying, 'Since the day that I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, that my name might be there. But I chose David to be over my people Israel.' Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD said to David my father, 'Whereas it was in your heart to build a house for my name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless, you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.' Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise that he made. For I have risen in the place of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. And there I have provided a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt."*

1 Kings 8:12-21

*Then the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD. Solomon offered as peace offerings to the LORD 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the people of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. The same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD, for there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat pieces of the peace offerings.*

1 Kings 8:62-64

▶ To prosper a people.

*Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions. She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. And when she came to Solomon, she told him all that was on her mind. And Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from the king that he could not explain to her. And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, their clothing, his cupbearers, and his burnt offerings that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more breath in her. And she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your words and of your wisdom, but I did not believe the reports until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard. Happy are your men! Happy are your servants, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD loved Israel forever, he has made you king, that you may execute justice and righteousness." Then she gave the king 120 talents of gold, and a very great quantity of spices and precious stones. Never again came such an abundance of spices as these that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. Moreover, the fleet of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir a very great amount of almug wood and precious stones. And the king made of the almug wood supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, also byres and harps for the singers. No such almug wood has come or been seen to this day. And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all that she desired, whatever she asked besides what was given her by the bounty of King Solomon. So she turned and went back to her own land with her servants.*

1 Kings 10:1-13

■ The danger of wealth...

- ▶ Leads to idolatry.

Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods.

1 Kings 11:1-8

- ▶ Results in immorality.

Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned; he is dead." As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead." And as soon as Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. And you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD, "Have you killed and also taken possession?"' And you shall say to him, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood."'

1 Kings 21:14-19

I was very angry when I heard their outcry and these words. I took counsel with myself, and I brought charges against the nobles and the officials. I said to them, "You are exacting interest, each from his brother." And I held a great assembly against them and said to them, "We, as far as we are able, have bought back our Jewish brothers who have been sold to the nations, but you even sell your brothers that they may be sold to us!" They were silent and could not find a word to say. So I said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. Ought you not to walk in the fear of our God to prevent the taunts of the nations our enemies? Moreover, I and my brothers and my servants are lending them money and grain.

Let us abandon this exacting of interest."

Nehemiah 5:6-10

■ The responsibility of wealth...

- ▶ The wealthy should live wisely.

In that night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to David my father, and have made me king in his place. O LORD God, let your word to David my father be now fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can govern this people of yours, which is so great?" God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked long life, but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may govern my people over whom I have made you king, wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like."

2 Chronicles 1:7-12

- ▶ The wealthy should give generously.

*Then the leaders of fathers' houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, and the officers over the king's work. They gave for the service of the house of God 5,000 talents and 10,000 darics of gold, 10,000 talents of silver, 18,000 talents of bronze and 100,000 talents of iron. And whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of the LORD, in the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the LORD. David the king also rejoiced greatly.*

1 Chronicles 29:6-9

*Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor. The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God. I also persevered in the work on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work. Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us. Now what was prepared at my expense for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people. Remember for my good, O my God,*

*all that I have done for this people.*

Nehemiah 5:14-19

- The nature of wealth...
  - ▶ Wealth is not always a reward for obedience.
  - ▶ Poverty is not always a punishment for disobedience.
  - ▶ Wealth can be used for both good and evil.

## **Psalms and Wisdom in Israel's History**

*Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.*

Proverbs 30:7-9

- Truth from Job...

*Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."*

Job 1:20-21

- ▶ Faithfulness to God does not guarantee prosperity in this world.

*because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; my justice was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the needy, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know.*

Job 29:12-16

*“If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it (for from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother’s womb I guided the widow), if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or the needy without covering, if his body has not blessed me, and if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep, if I have raised my hand against the fatherless, because I saw my help in the gate, then let my shoulder blade fall from my shoulder, and let my arm be broken from its socket.*

*For I was in terror of calamity from God, and I could not have faced his majesty.”*

Job 31:16-23

■ Truth from Song of Solomon...

*Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it. If a man offered for love all the wealth of his house, he would be utterly despised.*

Song of Solomon 8:7

- ▶ The beauty of marital love reflects the goodness of the material world.

*I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots. Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments, your neck with strings of jewels.*

Song of Solomon 1:9-10

*Behold, you are beautiful, my love, behold, you are beautiful! Your eyes are doves behind your veil. Your hair is like a flock of goats leaping down the slopes of Gilead. Your teeth are like a flock of shorn ewes that have come up from the washing, all of which bear twins, and not one among them has lost its young. Your lips are like a scarlet thread, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate behind your veil. Your neck is like the tower of David, built in rows of stone; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors.*

Song of Solomon 4:1-4

■ Truth from the Psalms...

*The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, who looks far down on the heavens and the earth? He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD!*

Psalm 113:4-9

- ▶ The revelation of God...
  - ✦ Amidst economic injustice, God is just.

*Better is the little that the righteous has than the abundance of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the LORD upholds the righteous.*

Psalm 37:16-17

- ✦ Amidst desperate need, God is compassionate.

*For the needy shall not always be forgotten, and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever.*

Psalm 9:18

*Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before him! Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.*

Psalm 68:4-6

- ▶ The reminders for man...
  - ✦ Wealth is fleeting.

*“O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Selah Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather! And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.”*

Psalm 39:4-7

- ✦ Debt is dangerous.

*The wicked borrows but does not pay back, but the righteous is generous and gives; for those blessed by the LORD shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off.*

Psalm 37:21-22

■ Truth from Proverbs...

*The rich and the poor meet together; the LORD is the maker of them all.*  
Proverbs 22:2

- ▶ Miscellaneous truths...
  - ✦ Wisdom is more important than wealth.

*My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;*

Proverbs 2:1-6

*Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.*

Proverbs 8:10-11

- ✦ Righteousness is more important than wealth.

*Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.*  
Proverbs 11:4

*Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.*  
Proverbs 11:28

*The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death. The violence of the wicked will sweep them away, because they refuse to do what is just. The way of the guilty is crooked, but the conduct of the pure is upright.*

Proverbs 21:6-8

- ✦ Humility is more important than wealth.

*The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.*

Proverbs 22:4

*Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.*

Proverbs 15:16

- ✦ Wealth is fleeting.

*Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.*

Proverbs 23:4-5

*Know well the condition of your flocks, and give attention to your herds, for riches do not last forever; and does a crown endure to all generations?*

Proverbs 27:23-24

- ✦ Debt is dangerous.

*My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger, if you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, and save yourself, for you have come into the hand of your neighbor: go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor. Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber; save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler.*

Proverbs 6:1-5

*Be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts. If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you?*

Proverbs 22:26-27

- ✦ Hard work is valuable.

*How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.*

Proverbs 6:9-11

*Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense.*

Proverbs 12:11

*In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.*

Proverbs 14:23

- ✦ Helping the needy is vital.

*Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.*  
Proverbs 17:5

*Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.*  
Proverbs 21:13

*Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, for the LORD will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them.*  
Proverbs 22:22-23

*A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.*  
Proverbs 29:7

- ▶ Concluding thoughts...

- ✦ Wealth is attributed to both the righteous and the wicked.

*Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.*  
Proverbs 3:9-10

*A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.*  
Proverbs 28:20

*Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.*  
Proverbs 28:6

- ✦ Poverty is attributed to both the righteous and the wicked.

*Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice.*  
Proverbs 16:8

*Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.*  
Proverbs 28:19

- ✦ Extreme wealth and extreme poverty both appear undesirable.

*Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.*  
Proverbs 30:7-9

■ Truth from Ecclesiastes...

*And whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I kept my heart from no pleasure, for my heart found pleasure in all my toil, and this was my reward for all my toil. Then I considered all that my hands had done and the toil I had expended in doing it, and behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was nothing to be gained under the sun.*

Ecclesiastes 2:10-11

- ▶ God's gifts are good.

*I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good as long as they live; also that everyone should eat and drink and take pleasure in all his toil--this is God's gift to man.*

Ecclesiastes 3:12-13

*Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil--this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart.*

Ecclesiastes 5:19-20

- ▶ This world is temporary.

*If a man fathers a hundred children and lives many years, so that the days of his years are many, but his soul is not satisfied with life's good things, and he also has no burial, I say that a stillborn child is better off than he. For it comes in vanity and goes in darkness, and in darkness its name is covered. Moreover, it has not seen the sun or known anything, yet it finds rest rather than he. Even though he should live a thousand years twice over, yet enjoy no good--do not all go to the one place?*

Ecclesiastes 6:3-6

*For who knows what is good for man while he lives the few days of his vain life, which he passes like a shadow? For who can tell man what will be after him under the sun?*

Ecclesiastes 6:12

- ▶ Riches do not satisfy.

*He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them, and what advantage has their owner but to see them with his eyes? Sweet is the sleep of a laborer, whether he eats little or much, but the full stomach of the rich will not let him sleep. There is a grievous evil that I have seen under the sun: riches were kept by their owner to his hurt, and those riches were lost in a bad venture. And he is father of a son, but he has nothing in his hand. As he came from his mother's womb he shall go again, naked as he came, and shall take nothing for his toil that he may carry away in his hand.*

Ecclesiastes 5:10-15

- ♦ The more you have, the more you want.
- ♦ The more you have, the less you're satisfied.
- ♦ The more you have, the more people (including the government) come after it.
- ♦ The more you have, the more you realize it doesn't meet your real needs.

- ♦ The more you have, the more you have to worry about.
- ♦ The more you have, the more you can hurt yourself by holding onto it.
- ♦ The more you have, the more you have to lose.
- ♦ The more you have, the more you'll leave behind.

*The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments,  
for this is the whole duty of man.*  
Ecclesiastes 12:13

## Prophets in Israel's History

*"Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for that which does not profit. Be appalled, O heavens, at this; be shocked, be utterly desolate, declares the LORD, for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water."*

Jeremiah 2:11-13

### ■ What Israel had done...

- ▶ The priests were immoral.

*"For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely."*

Jeremiah 6:13

*"A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name. But you say, 'How have we despised your name?' By offering polluted food upon my altar. But you say, 'How have we polluted you?' By saying that the LORD's table may be despised. When you offer blind animals in sacrifice, is that not evil? And when you offer those that are lame or sick, is that not evil? Present that to your governor; will he accept you or show you favor? says the LORD of hosts. And now entreat the favor of God, that he may be gracious to us. With such a gift from your hand, will he show favor to any of you? says the LORD of hosts. Oh that there were one among you who would shut the doors, that you might not kindle fire on my altar in vain! I have no pleasure in you, says the LORD of hosts, and I will not accept an offering from your hand."*

Malachi 1:6-10

- ▶ The people were idolatrous.

*Their land is filled with silver and gold, and there is no end to their treasures; their land is filled with horses, and there is no end to their chariots. Their land is filled with idols; they bow down to the work of their hands, to what their own fingers have made.*

Isaiah 2:7-8

*For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you.*

Isaiah 31:7

- ▶ They were oppressive of the poor.

*The people of the land have practiced extortion and committed robbery. They have oppressed the poor and needy, and have extorted from the sojourner without justice.*

Ezekiel 22:29

*Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy. They were haughty and did an abomination before me. So I removed them, when I saw it. Samaria has not committed half your sins. You have committed more abominations than they, and have made your sisters appear righteous by all the abominations that you have committed. Bear your disgrace, you also, for you have intervened on behalf of your sisters. Because of your sins in which you acted more abominably than they, they are more in the right than you.*

*So be ashamed, you also, and bear your disgrace, for you have made your sisters appear righteous.*

Ezekiel 16:49-52

*Woe to those who devise wickedness and work evil on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in the power of their hand. They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them away; they oppress a man and his house, a man and his inheritance. Therefore thus says the LORD: behold, against this family I am devising disaster, from which you cannot remove your necks, and you shall not walk haughtily, for it will be a time of disaster.*

Micah 2:1-3

*Therefore because you trample on the poor and you exact taxes of grain from him, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not dwell in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine. For I know how many are your transgressions and how great are your sins-- you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and turn aside the needy in the gate.*

Amos 5:11-12

- ▶ They boasted in their wealth.

*by your wisdom and your understanding you have made wealth for yourself, and have gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; by your great wisdom in your trade you have increased your wealth, and your heart has become proud in your wealth-- therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you make your heart like the heart of a god, therefore, behold, I will bring foreigners upon you, the most ruthless of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and defile your splendor.*

Ezekiel 28:4-7

*"Hear this word, you cows of Bashan, who are on the mountain of Samaria, who oppress the poor, who crush the needy, who say to your husbands, 'Bring that we may drink!' The Lord GOD has sworn by his holiness that, behold, the days are coming upon you, when they shall take you away with hooks, even the last of you with fishhooks. And you shall go out through the breaches, each one straight ahead; and you shall be cast out into Harmon," declares the LORD.*

Amos 4:1-3

*"Woe to those who lie on beds of ivory and stretch themselves out on their couches, and eat lambs from the flock and calves from the midst of the stall, who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp and like David invent for themselves instruments of music, who drink wine in bowls and anoint themselves with the finest oils, but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!"*

Amos 6:4-6

- ▶ They missed the point of worship.

*The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: "Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you men of Judah who enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your deeds, and I will let you dwell in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: 'This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.' For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever."*

Jeremiah 7:1-7

*"What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations-- I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause."*

Isaiah 1:11-17

- What Israel must do...

- ▶ Lament over sin.

*And you shall say to them, "This is the nation that did not obey the voice of the LORD their God, and did not accept discipline; truth has perished; it is cut off from their lips. Cut off your hair and cast it away; raise a lamentation on the bare heights, for the LORD has rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath."*

Jeremiah 7:28-29

*Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests; wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God.*

Joel 1:13

*Hear this word that I take up over you in lamentation, O house of Israel:*

Amos 5:1

- ▶ Seek justice for the needy.

*“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, ‘Here I am.’ If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday. And the LORD will guide you continually and satisfy your desire in scorched places and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.”*

Isaiah 58:6-11

*“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

Micah 6:6-8

- ▶ Practice humble generosity.

*Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the LORD.”*

Jeremiah 9:23-24

*Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need. I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of your soil, and your vine in the field shall not fail to bear, says the LORD of hosts. Then all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a land of delight, says the LORD of hosts.*

Malachi 3:10-12

- ▶ Trust the restorative promises of God.

*“I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land. And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them. They shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid. And I will provide*

*for them renowned plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, declares the Lord GOD. 31 And you are my sheep, human sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, declares the Lord GOD.”*

Ezekiel 34:25-31

- ▶ Fulfill the redemptive purpose of God.

*“For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD. And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites,” says the LORD. “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me,” declares the LORD.*

Isaiah 66:18-23

## Possessions and Jesus

### The Life of Jesus

- From a poor family.

*And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."*

Luke 2:22-24

- Surrounded by varied followers.

*And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.*

Mark 1:19-20

*He went out again beside the sea, and all the crowd was coming to him, and he was teaching them. And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, "Follow me." And he rose and followed him. And as he reclined at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.*

Mark 2:13-15

*One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner."*

Luke 7:36-39

- An itinerant ministry.

*As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."*

Luke 9:57-58

- An intentional mission.

*And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."*

Luke 4:16-21

- ▶ A spiritual mission.
  - ✦ To preach good news.
- ▶ With social ramifications.
  - ✦ To address deep needs.
- ▶ See the universality of Jesus' mission.
  - ✦ Jesus did not come only for local affection; He came for global adoration.
- ▶ See the radicality of Jesus' mercy.
  - ✦ Today is the day of salvation, not condemnation.

## The Temptations of Jesus

*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, and On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.*

Matthew 4:1-11

- All three temptations involve material possessions.
- Spiritual integrity is more important than material prosperity.
  - ▶ The lure of the world is strong.
  - ▶ The power of God's Word is sufficient.

## The Teachings of Jesus

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

Matthew 5:3

- Blessing is reserved for the utterly destitute.

*"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. 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. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.*

*And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."*

Matthew 6:1-4

- Piety should not be paraded.

*Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.*  
Matthew 6:11-12

- The Father provides physical provision.
  - ▶ We ask God to meet our needs, not our greeds.
- The Father provides spiritual redemption.

*“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.”*  
Matthew 6:19-21

- Two treasures...
  - ▶ We can live for temporal treasures that we cannot keep.
    - ✦ Materialism is not only wrong; it’s ridiculous.
  - ▶ We can live for eternal treasures that we cannot lose.
    - ✦ Generosity is not a huge sacrifice; it’s humbly selfish.

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

*“I value all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity.”*  
John Wesley

- Two truths...
  - ▶ Our use of money demonstrates where our heart is.
  - ▶ Our use of money determines where our heart goes.
    - ✦ Money leads.
    - ✦ Hearts follow.

*“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”*  
Matthew 6:22-23

- Two perspectives...
  - ▶ Shortsighted: Eyes focused on the things of earth.
    - ✦ Concerned with where you/others will be a few years from now.
  - ▶ Farsighted: Eyes focused on treasure in eternity.
    - ✦ Concerned with where you/others will be a few million years from now.

*“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”*  
Matthew 6:24

- Two masters...
  - ▶ Money on the throne.
    - ✦ A life wasted in the pursuit of wealth on earth.
  - ▶ God on the throne.
    - ✦ A life invested in the pursuit of wealth in heaven.

*“Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”*

Matthew 6:25-34

- Seek the kingdom of Christ.
  - ▶ Earthly treasures multiply anxiety.
  - ▶ Eternal treasures guarantee security.

*“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”*

Luke 12:32-34

- Trust the love of Christ.
  - ▶ You have a shepherd who protects you.
  - ▶ You have a Father who delights in you.
  - ▶ You have a King who provides for you.

*“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”*

Matthew 7:12

- Meet others’ needs like you meet your own needs.

*And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.”*

Luke 6:20-26

- Jesus prophesies a great reversal.
  - ▶ In eternity, many will find themselves in an opposite condition from their situation on earth.
- Jesus promises great reward.
  - ▶ Followers of Christ are willing to endure present hardship in order to experience future glory.

*But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe the mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God.*

*These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.*

Luke 11:41-42

- We give a tithe as God's Word commands.
- We live with love that God's justice compels.

*Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. 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? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple."*

Luke 14:25-33

- Jesus requires superior love.
  - ▶ In comparison to Christ, we hate the people we love.
  - ▶ This changes our perspective.
- Jesus requires exclusive loyalty.
  - ▶ Through the cross of Christ, we die to the life we live.
  - ▶ This changes our priorities.
    - ✦ We are workers constructing a building.
    - ✦ We are warriors fighting a battle.
- Jesus requires total loss.
  - ▶ For the cause of Christ, we give up everything we have.
  - ▶ This changes our possessions.

*And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul?"*

Mark 8:34-37

- We do not live for gratification in this world.
- We live for gain in the world to come.

*And as he was setting out on his journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, Do not commit adultery, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Do not defraud, Honor your father and mother.'" And he said to him, "Teacher, all these I have kept from my youth." And Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, "You lack one thing: go, sell all that you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." Disheartened by the saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. And Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How difficult it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how difficult it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." And they were exceedingly astonished, and said to him, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God." Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."*

Mark 10:17-31

- Jesus' call to salvation demands total surrender.
  - ▶ Salvation is not a matter of external reformation.
  - ▶ Salvation is ultimately a matter of internal transformation.
  - ▶ Jesus is not merely a respectable teacher.
  - ▶ Jesus is the sovereign Lord.
- Jesus calls us to give sacrificially because He loves us.
  - ▶ Jesus loves rich people enough to tell them the truth.
- Jesus gives commands, not considerations.
  - ▶ As followers of Christ, we do not consider options.
  - ▶ As followers of Christ, we obey.
- Jesus does not want to strip us of our pleasure; He wants to satisfy us with His treasure.
  - ▶ Do we want unpredictable investments?
  - ▶ Or do we want inexhaustible savings?
- Love of possessions will inevitably and ultimately rob us of the joy for which we have been created.
  - ▶ His eyes were blind.
  - ▶ His face was sad.
  - ▶ His hands were full.

- We desperately need to realize the deadly nature of our possessions.
  - ▶ We are used to recognizing wealth as a blessing.
  - ▶ Are we willing to realize that wealth is often a barrier?
  
- Salvation is utterly impossible for any and every person apart from the grace of God.
  - ▶ God gives salvation to us.
    - ✦ God does not sell us salvation.
    - ✦ God does not trade us salvation.
  - ▶ God enables sacrifice in us.
  
- Jesus frees us from our bondage to ourselves and our stuff.
  - ▶ We are free to go wherever He calls.
  - ▶ We are free to give whatever He asks.
  
- Jesus unites His people together to enjoy and encourage one another as they abandon themselves to Him.
  - ▶ The church no longer seems like an abstract idea.
  - ▶ Sacrifice no longer seems like an appropriate term.
  - ▶ This world no longer seems like an adequate home.

*He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. or the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*

Luke 19:1-10

- The basis of salvation: Divine grace.
- The fruit of salvation: Just generosity.

*And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."*

Mark 14:3-9

- The classic proof-text for...
  - ▶ Indulging in possessions.
  - ▶ Ignoring the poor.
- Jesus is not devaluing social justice.
- Jesus is condemning self-righteous judgmentalism.
- A unique occasion in redemptive history warrants a lavish gift.
- The normal practice of redemptive history includes consistent generosity.

*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-- 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.*

Deuteronomy 15:4-5

*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.'*

Deuteronomy 15:11

*And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?'*

*But you have made it a den of robbers."*

Mark 11:15-17

- The temple is designed to display God's purity.
  - ▶ God does not intend worship for worldly gain.

*"For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. Behold, you trust in deceptive words to no avail. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, 'We are delivered!'—only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord.*

Jeremiah 7:5-11

- The temple is designed to reflect God's purpose.
  - ▶ God does intend worship for worldwide glory.

*"And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a*

*house of prayer for all peoples."*

Isaiah 56:6-7

*And they sent to him some of the Pharisees and some of the Herodians, to trap him in his talk. And they came and said to him, "Teacher, we know that you are true and do not care about anyone's opinion. For you are not swayed by appearances, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?" But, knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, "Why put me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it." And they brought one. And he said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to him, "Caesar's." Jesus said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they marveled at him.*

Mark 12:13-17

- Give your taxes to your government.
- Give your trust to your God.

*And in his teaching he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and like greetings in the marketplaces and have the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows' houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation." And he sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the offering box. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."*

Mark 12:38-44

- Jesus commends sacrificial giving...giving beyond our ability to give.
- Sacrifice is measured more by relative risk than by actual amount.
- Genuineness is measured more by self-denying humility than by self-promoting piety.

## The Parables of Jesus

- Almost  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Jesus' parables deal directly with money and possessions.
  - ▶ Jesus uses money to illustrate a proper understanding of the kingdom.
  - ▶ A proper understanding of the kingdom transforms our use of money.
- The parable of the two debtors

*One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."*

*"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."*

Luke 7:36-43

- ▶ Jesus celebrates with sinners.
- ▶ Jesus cares for outcasts.

■ The parable of the seed among thorns

*And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.*

Mark 4:18-19

- ▶ Possessions can keep people out of the kingdom of God.

■ The parable of the hidden treasure and fine pearl

*“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*

*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”*

Matthew 13:44-46

- ▶ They found something worth losing everything for.
- ▶ We have found Someone worth losing everything for.
  - ✦ Abandoning possessions for Christ is not a sacrifice.
  - ✦ Abandoning possessions for Christ is smart.

■ The parable of the Good Samaritan

*But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.’ Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” And Jesus said to him,*

*“You go, and do likewise.”*

Luke 10:29-37

- ▶ The point of the story...
  - ✦ This is not just a story about helping other people.
  - ✦ This is a story about needing a new heart.
- ▶ The heart of mercy...
  - ✦ See the love God requires.
    - Undivided love for God.
    - Unselfish love for others.

- ✦ Embrace the love God offers.
  - We need to realize our poverty.
  - We need to receive His mercy.
- ✦ Give the love God desires.
  - His love is compelling.
    - We are not motivated to care for the poor by guilt.
    - We are motivated to care for the poor by the Gospel.
  - His love is comprehensive.
    - Mercy does not restrict who is loved.
    - Mercy does not restrict how much one is loved.
  - His love is costly.
    - Mercy from God takes great risks.
    - Mercy from God involves great sacrifice.
    - Mercy from God leads to great reward.

■ The parable of the rich fool

*And he told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully, and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."*

Luke 12:16-21

- ▶ The man is covetous.
- ▶ The man is consumed with acquiring more and more possessions.
- ▶ The man is self-centered.
  - ✦ He hoarded possessions for himself.
  - ✦ He held possessions from God.
- ▶ The man is self-condemning.
  - ✦ Not because he is rich.
  - ✦ Because he is idolatrous.

■ The parable of the great banquet

*And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.'*

Luke 14:17-21

- ▶ The kingdom belongs to the least expected.
- ▶ The kingdom belongs to the least attached.
- ▶ It is possible to be so focused on earthly treasures that you forsake eternal treasure.

■ The parable of the dishonest manager.

*The master commended the dishonest manager for his shrewdness. For the sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous wealth, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

Luke 16:8-13

- ▶ One primary conclusion...
  - ✦ Use earthly possessions to accomplish eternal purposes.
- ▶ Two possible choices...
  - ✦ We can serve money (and use God for our own means).
  - ✦ Or we can serve God (and use money to accomplish His mission).
- ▶ Three points to consider...
  - ✦ Our faithfulness with small tasks shows our fitfulness for large tasks.
  - ✦ Our treatment of material resources demonstrates our trustworthiness with spiritual riches.
  - ✦ Our stewardship of another's treasure reflects our responsibility with our own talents.

■ The parable of the rich man and Lazarus

*The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.' But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'*

Luke 16:22-26

- ▶ A Root Cause:
  - ✦ Unbelief: The rich man lacked faith in God.
- ▶ A Divine Contrast:
  - ✦ God responds to the needs of the poor with compassion.
  - ✦ God responds to those who neglect the poor with condemnation.
- ▶ An Eternal Consequence: If in our unbelief, we indulge ourselves and neglect the poor...
  - ✦ Earth will be our heaven.
  - ✦ Eternity will be our hell.
- ▶ A Clear Choice:
  - ✦ Continue in hollow religion that neglects the poor.
    - Caring for the poor is not an optional extra in salvation.
    - Caring for the poor is necessary evidence of salvation.

- ✦ Turn in honest repentance to care for the poor.
  - Hear the Word humbly.
  - Obey the Word quickly.

■ The parable of the talents

*He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness.*

*In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'*

Matthew 25:24-30

- ▶ We will be responsible for the time, talents, and treasures God entrusts to us.
- ▶ We must be ready for the Master's return.
  - ✦ Will we be found sitting on our treasure for our sake?
  - ✦ Will we be found spreading our treasure for His sake?

■ The sheep and the goats

*"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."*

Matthew 25:41-46

- ▶ The righteous turn their attention to Christ by servicing the material needs of His people.
  - ✦ They go to heaven.
- ▶ The unrighteous turn away from Christ by ignoring the material needs of His people.
  - ✦ They go to hell.

## Possessions and the New Testament People of God

### The Book of Acts

- Is the church setting precedent?
- Or is the church showing principles?
- Consider a both-and approach...

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.*

Acts 2:42-47

- Not a communist economy.
- Instead, a faith community.
  - Marked by visible unity.
  - Characterized by voluntary generosity.

*Seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked to receive alms. And Peter directed his gaze at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.*

Acts 3:3-7

- A spiritual mission...
- With social ramifications.

*Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. 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 and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need. Thus Joseph, who was also called by the apostles Barnabas (which means son of encouragement), a Levite, a native of Cyprus, sold a field that belonged to him and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.*

Acts 4:32-37

- They selflessly shared their possessions.
- They boldly proclaimed the Gospel.
- They sacrificially cared for one another.
  - No one was needy.

*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—*

Deuteronomy 15:4

- ▶ Encouragement was evident.

*But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and with his wife's knowledge he kept back for himself some of the proceeds and brought only a part of it and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard these words, he fell down and breathed his last. And great fear came upon all who heard of it. The young men rose and wrapped him up and carried him out and buried him.*

Acts 5:1-6

- They valued spiritual appearance more than spiritual authenticity.
  - ▶ Ananias and Sapphira: Simulated holiness.
  - ▶ Barnabas: Sacrificial kindness.
- They lacked genuine fear before God.
  - ▶ Fear deception.
  - ▶ Fear distrust.
  - ▶ Fear disobedience.

*Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

Acts 6:1-7

- The community of faith cares for members.
  - ▶ No follower of Christ should be in need or want.
- The community of faith appoints leaders.
  - ▶ Who meet needs according to the Word.
  - ▶ Who support the ministry of the Word.
  - ▶ Who unify the body around the Word.

*Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, saying, "Give me this power also, so that anyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."*

Acts 8:18-23

- God is not a means of financial gain.
- Beware the danger of misdirected motives.
  - ▶ Whose name are you living for?
- Beware the danger of misunderstood power.
  - ▶ The pathway to spiritual power is paved by God-centered prayer and Gospel-centered proclamation.
- Beware the danger of misplaced faith.
  - ▶ The ultimate question: Where is your heart?
- Additional observations in Acts...
  - ▶ An increasing number of Christians possessed wealth.

*One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul. And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.*

Acts 16:14-15

*Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.*

Acts 17:12

*And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.*

Acts 18:2-3

- ♦ They were recognized for their generosity.

*Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.*

Acts 9:36

*At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people, and prayed continually to God.*

Acts 10:1-2

*And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.'"*

Acts 10:30-31

- ♦ They were known for their hospitality.

*When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.*

Acts 12:12

*But the Jews were jealous, and taking some wicked men of the rabble, they formed a mob, set the city in an uproar, and attacked the house of Jason, seeking to bring them out to the crowd. And when they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some of the brothers before the city authorities, shouting, "These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has received them, and they are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. And when they had taken money as security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.*

Acts 17:5-9

*And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue.*

Acts 18:7

- ▶ Increasing tension developed between the church and the materialistic culture that surrounded her.

*She followed Paul and us, crying out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, "These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice." The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely.*

*Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

Acts 16:17-24

*Also many of those who were now believers came, confessing and divulging their practices. And a number of those who had practiced magic arts brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted the value of them and found it came to fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily.*

Acts 19:18-20

*About that time there arose no little disturbance concerning the Way. For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought no little business to the craftsmen. These he gathered together, with the workmen in similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that from this business we have our wealth. And you see and hear that not only in Ephesus but in almost all of Asia this Paul has persuaded and turned away a great many people, saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis may be counted as nothing, and that she may even be deposed from her magnificence, she whom all Asia and the world worship."*

Acts 19:23-27

- ▶ Increasing poverty in Jerusalem necessitated a sacrificial offering from churches in other areas.

*Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). So the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability, to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. And they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.*

Acts 11:27-30

*Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings.*

Acts 24:17

## James

- Probably the first Christian letter/sermon that gives extensive treatment to poverty and possessions.

*Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.*

James 1:9-11

- Earthly riches are temporary.

*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.*

James 1:27

- The church is marked by sacrificial care for those in need.
- The church is marked by clear separation from the ways of the world.

*My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?*

James 2:1-7

- We are captivated by the glory of Christ.
  - ▶ We see His supremacy over the wealthy.
  - ▶ We remember His sacrifice for the needy.
- We are gripped by the grace of Christ.
  - ▶ Christ reverses our status in this world.
  - ▶ Christ transforms our standards in this world.

- We are devoted to the law of Christ.
  - ▶ Favoritism disrespects man.
  - ▶ Favoritism dishonors God.
- We are cognizant of the judgment of Christ.
  - ▶ Our words will be judged.
  - ▶ Our deeds (or lack thereof) will be judged.
- We are a reflection of the mercy of Christ.
  - ▶ As we have received mercy, so we extend mercy.
  - ▶ If we do not extend mercy, we demonstrate that we have not received mercy.

*What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith and I have works." Show me your faith apart from your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe--and shudder!*

James 2:14-19

- Faith in our hearts is evident in the fruit of our lives.
- People who claim to be Christians but fail to help poverty-stricken fellow believers are in fact not saved.
  - ▶ Acts of mercy are not means to salvation.
  - ▶ Acts of mercy are necessary evidence of salvation.
- Ultimately, deedless faith is useless faith.
  - ▶ Faith is not mere intellectual assent.
  - ▶ Faith is not simply an emotional response.
  - ▶ Faith involves willful obedience.

*What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.*

James 4:1-4

- Friendship with the world...
  - ▶ Comes from the sinful desires of the flesh.
  - ▶ Motivated by a longing for earthly pleasure.
  - ▶ Results in spiritual adultery against God.
- Friendship with God...
  - ▶ Comes from the gracious desire of God.
  - ▶ Motivated by a longing for eternal satisfaction.
  - ▶ Results in submission to the authority of God.

*Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"-- yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.*

James 4:13-17

- We can become so consumed with the material realm...
  - ▶ That we become blind to spiritual realities.
- God is sovereign over our life and our death...
  - ▶ And over our activities and our accomplishments.

*Come now, you rich, weep and howl for the miseries that are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have corroded, and their corrosion will be evidence against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure in the last days. Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in self-indulgence. You have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous person. He does not resist you.*

James 5:1-6

- God is coming to judge the sinful.
  - ▶ For hoarding wealth...
    - ✦ Their treasures on earth would bring about their torment in eternity.
  - ▶ For cheating workers...
    - ✦ Their possessions were accumulating while people were dying.
  - ▶ For living in self-indulgence...
    - ✦ They were overfed and unconcerned.
  - ▶ For condemning men...
    - ✦ Their oppression of others would lead to their own damnation.
- God is coming to deliver the faithful.

## Paul

- Paul before Christ: Prosperity.

*If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.*

Philippians 3:4-6

■ Paul after Christ: Suffering.

*Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.*  
2 Corinthians 11:24-27

■ **Galatians**

*Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.*  
Galatians 2:10

- ▶ Amidst theological controversy, there was no debate concerning the need to help the poor.

*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. For each will have to bear his own load. One who is taught the word must share all good things with the one who teaches. Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.*  
Galatians 6:1-10

- ▶ Four enemies of spiritual community...
  - ✦ Self-Centeredness.
  - ✦ Self-Righteousness.
  - ✦ Self-Sufficiency.
  - ✦ Self-Esteem.
- ▶ Five essentials for spiritual community...
  - ✦ Confront one another in your sin.
  - ✦ Comfort one another in your struggles.
  - ✦ Share your resources generously.
  - ✦ Sow your resources eternally.
  - ✦ Spend your resources selflessly (especially for the sake of the church).

## ■ 1 and 2 Thessalonians

*Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.*

2 Thessalonians 3:6-12

- ▶ Avoid idle people.
- ▶ Work for your possessions.

## ■ 1 Corinthians

*Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.*

1 Corinthians 4:8-13

- ▶ Paul contrasts their leaders' prosperity with his poverty.
- ▶ In this disparity, Paul asserts his credibility.

*I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler--not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."*

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

- ▶ The church must discipline...
  - ✦ In situations of sexual immorality.
  - ✦ In situations of material greed.
- ▶ The Christian must repent...
  - ✦ Or be cast out of the church.
  - ✦ Or miss out on the kingdom.

*Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel. But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting. For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but if not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.*

1 Corinthians 9:8-18

- ▶ Paul asserts that leaders who sow spiritual blessings in the church should reap material blessings from the church.
- ▶ Yet Paul yielded this privilege in Corinth because he believed this was better for the Gospel.
  - ◆ Paul wanted to be unattached.
  - ◆ Paul wanted to be above reproach.

*But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.*

1 Corinthians 11:17-22

*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another-- if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home--so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.*

1 Corinthians 11:27-34

- ▶ Taking the Lord's Supper necessitates concern for the Lord's body (the church).
  - ◆ Some were gluttons and drunkards.
  - ◆ Others were hungry and impoverished.

- ▶ To partake of the Lord's Supper while ignoring the poor misses the point.
  - ✦ You drink your judgment.
  - ✦ You risk your life.

*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 Corinthians 13:3

- ▶ Apart from Christ's love, giving away everything you have is meaningless.

*Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.*  
1 Corinthians 16:1-4

- ▶ A weekly offering was taken for the impoverished church in Jerusalem.

## ■ 2 Corinthians

*We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.*  
2 Corinthians 6:3-10

*Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached God's gospel to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boasting of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!*  
2 Corinthians 11:7-11

*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*  
2 Corinthians 8:9

- ▶ We give out of an abundance of grace.
  - ✦ We give willingly.
    - We give based on God's blessing.
    - We give (at least) according to our ability.

- ✦ We give generously.
  - Generous giving to God...
    - Results in greater giving from God.
  - God gives enough for us...
    - And He gives excess for others.
- ✦ We give cheerfully.
  - We are not forced by God to give.
  - We are freed by God to give.
- ▶ We give as a demonstration of the Gospel.
  - ✦ We sacrifice our rights for others.
  - ✦ We spend our resources on others.
- ▶ We give to promote thanksgiving to God.
  - ✦ Giving unites the people of God.
    - We give regularly to the church.
    - The church deals responsibly with our gift.
  - ✦ Giving exalts the goodness of God.

## ■ Romans

- ▶ We give generously inside the body of Christ.

*the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.*

Romans 12:8

- ▶ We give selflessly outside of the body of Christ.

*To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Romans 12:20-21

- ▶ We give willingly to the government.

*Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

Romans 13:1-7

- ▶ We are cautious with debt.

*Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.*  
Romans 13:8

- ♦ At the very least, we should normally avoid debt.
  - ♦ At the very least, we should quickly pay off debt.
- ▶ Collection of money by the church was a picture of unity in the church.

*I hope to see you in passing as I go to Spain, and to be helped on my journey there by you, once I have enjoyed your company for a while. At present, however, I am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. For they were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.*  
Romans 15:24-28

- ♦ Offerings are critical to fellowship in the local and global church.

## ■ Philemon

*If he has wronged you at all, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. I, Paul, write this with my own hand: I will repay it--to say nothing of your owing me even your own self.*  
Philemon 1:18-19

## ■ Colossians

*Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*  
Colossians 3:5

- ▶ Covetousness is idolatry.
- ▶ Money is either...
  - ♦ An idol.
  - ♦ Or a tool.

## ■ Ephesians

*Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.*  
Ephesians 4:28

- ▶ 3 ways to approach things...
  - ✦ We can steal to get things.
  - ✦ We can work to get things.
  - ✦ We can work to get things to give things.

*For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.*

Ephesians 5:5

- ▶ To be covetous is to be idolatrous.
- ▶ To be greedy is to miss the kingdom.

## ■ Philippians

*Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through*

*him who strengthens me.*

Philippians 4:11-13

- ▶ Contentment is found in Christ alone, regardless of possessions.
  - ✦ In times of want, we must learn patience and trust.
  - ✦ In times of wealth, we must learn humility and dependence.

*I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Philippians 4:18-20

- ▶ Giving in the church brings glory to Christ.

## ■ Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy; 2 Timothy; Titus)

*I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.*

1 Timothy 2:8-10

- ▶ Apparel in worship should be modest (not costly).
- ▶ Attitude in worship should be humble (not drawing attention to oneself).

*Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*

1 Timothy 3:2-3

*Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine,  
not greedy for dishonest gain.*

1 Timothy 3:8

- ▶ Leaders in the church should honor God with their money.

*For there are many who are insubordinate, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision party. They must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for shameful gain what they ought not to teach.*

Titus 1:10-11

*For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,*

2 Timothy 3:2-4

*Honor widows who are truly widows. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show godliness to their own household and to make some return to their parents, for this is pleasing in the sight of God. She who is truly a widow, left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day, but she who is self-indulgent is dead even while she lives. Command these things as well, so that they may be without reproach. 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 Timothy 5:3-8

- ▶ First, a widow should be provided for by her family.
- ▶ Then, a widow should be provided for by her church.

*Let a widow be enrolled if she is not less than sixty years of age, having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work.*

1 Timothy 5:9-10

- ▶ The church should reflect the grace of Christ to the widow.
- ▶ The widow should reflect the goodness of Christ in the church.

*If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. 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.*

1 Timothy 6:3-10

- ▶ The path to great gain...
  - ✦ Be content with having necessities.
  - ✦ Be cautious with acquiring excess.
    - You will take none of it with you.
    - It will take contentment from you.
    - You will miss God's purpose for you.
- ▶ The path to total ruin...
  - ✦ Love of money.
  - ✦ Desire for riches.
    - A life of self-destruction.
    - A life of self-mutilation.
- ▶ The plan for rich people...
  - ✦ Flee self-confidence.
  - ✦ Flee self-centeredness.
  - ✦ Focus on God.
    - He gives good things for your enjoyment.
    - Use good things for others' enjoyment.
    - Invest good things in your and others' eternity.

## Miscellaneous

### ■ Hebrews

- ▶ Joy supersedes property.

*But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.*

Hebrews 10:32-36

- ▶ Contentment supersedes possessions.

*Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"*

Hebrews 13:5-6

### ■ 1 Peter

- ▶ Women should be modest.

*Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.*

1 Peter 3:3-4

- ▶ Elders should be honest.

*So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.*

1 Peter 5:1-3

## ■ 2 Peter

- ▶ Greed is associated with dishonesty.

*And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*

2 Peter 2:3

- ▶ Greed is associated with adultery.

*They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children!*

2 Peter 2:14

## ■ Jude

- ▶ Beware leaders who are greedy for financial gain.

*Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion.*

Jude 11

## John

*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

1 John 2:15-17

- Beware lust for pleasure.
- Beware pride in possessions.

*By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. 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? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.*

1 John 3:16-18

- God's love compels action on behalf of brothers in need.

- If we do not act, we do not know God's love.

*Beloved, it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers, strangers as they are, who testified to your love before the church. You will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God. For they have gone out for the sake of the name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support people like these, that we may be fellow workers for the truth.*

3 John 5-8

- Recognize this supportive hospitality.
- Remember this simple blessing...

*Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.*

3 John 2

- The lesson of Smyrna: It is possible to be materially poor yet spiritually rich.

*"I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life."*

Revelation 2:9-10

- The lesson of Laodicea: It is possible to be materially rich yet spiritually poor.

*"I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."*

Revelation 3:15-20

- The profile of materialistic Babylon...

*After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was made bright with his glory. And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. For all nations have drunk the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich from the power of her luxurious living."*

Revelation 18:1-3

- ▶ Known for idolatrous religion.
- ▶ Filled with excessive luxury.
- ▶ Characterized by indulgent immorality.

■ The plea to God's people...

*Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities. Pay her back as she herself has paid back others, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double portion for her in the cup she mixed. As she glorified herself and lived in luxury, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning, since in her heart she says, 'I sit as a queen, I am no widow, and mourning I shall never see.' For this reason her plagues will come in a single day, death and mourning and famine, and she will be burned up with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who has judged her."*

Revelation 18:4-8

- ▶ Flee materialism!
- ▶ God abhors it!

■ The picture of God's judgment...

*And the kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. They will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! Alas! You great city, you mighty city, Babylon! For in a single hour your judgment has come." And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo anymore, cargo of gold, silver, jewels, pearls, fine linen, purple cloth, silk, scarlet cloth, all kinds of scented wood, all kinds of articles of ivory, all kinds of articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble, cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls. "The fruit for which your soul longed has gone from you, and all your delicacies and your splendors are lost to you, never to be found again!" The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud, "Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, adorned with gold, with jewels, and with pearls! For in a single hour all this wealth has been laid waste." And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off 18 and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?"*

Revelation 18:9-18

- ▶ Riches ripped away.
- ▶ Wealth laid waste.

■ The pleasure of God's people...

*And they threw dust on their heads as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! For in a single hour she has been laid waste. Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"*

Revelation 18:19-20

*After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants." Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great."*

Revelation 19:1-5

- ▶ Joy is found not in wealth.
- ▶ Joy is found only in worship.

## CONCLUSIONS

### The Character of God

*"Tell me what you think about money and I can tell you what you think about God."*

Billy Graham

- God is the sovereign owner of all things, and we are His stewards.
  - ▶ God's ownership...
    - ✦ He has authority.
    - ✦ He has expectations.
    - ✦ He gives trust.
    - ✦ He is strict.
    - ✦ He is generous.
    - ✦ He is absent.
    - ✦ He will return.
  - ▶ Our stewardship...
    - ✦ We are accountable.
    - ✦ We must be faithful.
    - ✦ We must be focused.
    - ✦ We must be fearful.
    - ✦ We must work.
    - ✦ We must be wise.
    - ✦ We must be ready.
  
- God is the compassionate judge over all peoples, and we are His servants.
  - ▶ In His compassion,...
    - ✦ God cares for the poor.
    - ✦ God defends the powerless.
  - ▶ In His justice,...
    - ✦ God dispenses property and possessions to all His people.
    - ✦ God condemns the prosperous who disregard the poor.
  - ▶ As His servants,...
    - ✦ Our goal is not luxury in this world.
    - ✦ Our goal is love for God.
  
- Material possessions are a good gift from God to His people for His purpose.
  - ▶ Possessions are intended by God to be saved...
    - ✦ Righteousness and riches can coexist, at least for a time.
    - ✦ Extravagance is an exception, not the norm.
  - ▶ Possessions are intended by God to be shared...
    - ✦ With the needy.
    - ✦ Among the nations.

- Promises of prosperity in the Old Testament must be understood in the context of covenant.
  - In the Old Testament...
    - ✦ Obedience to God leads some to acquire possessions on earth.
      - God promises material blessing for obedience.
      - God promises material blessings for hard work.
    - ✦ God gave possessions to build a place that displayed His glory among the nations.

*“The New Testament carried forward the major principles of the Old Testament and intertestamental Judaism with one conspicuous omission: never was material wealth promised as a guaranteed reward for either spiritual obedience or simple hard work. Material reward for piety never reappears in Jesus’ teaching, and is explicitly contradicted throughout.”*

Craig Blomberg

- In the New Testament...
  - ✦ Obedience to God leads some to abandon possessions on earth.
  - ✦ God gives possessions to build a people who take His glory to the nations.

### The Sinfulness of Man

- In the hands of sinful people, wealth is dangerous.
  - Wealth in a sinful world leads to...
    - ✦ Injustice.
      - We forget the poor.
    - ✦ Immorality.
      - We forget the truth.
    - ✦ Idolatry.
      - We forget our God.
  - Wealth in a sinful world makes it difficult for someone who is rich to even be a Christian.
- In the lives of sinful people, greed is deadly.
  - Greed is diverse...
    - ✦ Covetousness: Lusting after what we don’t have.
    - ✦ Possessiveness: Hoarding what we do have.
  - Greed is devastating...
    - ✦ One who lusts is an adulterer.
    - ✦ One who lies is a murderer.
    - ✦ One who is greedy is an idolater.
  - Greed is damning.
- Materialism and asceticism are both sinful perversions of God’s design for possessions.
  - Asceticism sees money and possessions as sinful.
    - ✦ Asceticism equates piety with poverty.
    - ✦ In asceticism,...
      - Self-denial becomes self-advancement.
      - Extreme simplicity becomes an excessive standard.
    - ✦ Jesus was simple, but He was not an ascetic.

- ▶ Materialism sees money and possessions as satisfying.
  - ✦ God created us to love people and use things.
  - ✦ Materialism loves things and uses people.
  - ✦ Materialism...
    - Blinds us to our spiritual poverty.
    - Brings us worry and anxiety.
    - Leads us to endless futility.
    - Lures us into self-sufficiency.
    - Traps us in self-centeredness.
    - Distracts us from our purpose.
    - Deceives us in our churches.
    - Keeps us from the kingdom.

### The Sufficiency of Christ

- The incarnation of Christ is the foundation for generosity in the church.
  - ▶ We see His poverty in the world.
    - ✦ He gives up His rights.
    - ✦ He gives us His resources.
  - ▶ We are His people in the world.
    - ✦ We give up our rights.
    - ✦ We give others our resources.
- When Jesus saves us spiritually, He transforms us materially.
  - ▶ Jesus covers our sin.
  - ▶ Jesus changes our lives.
    - ✦ We do not live/give sacrificially because we are in debt to Christ.
    - ✦ We live/give sacrificially because we are indwelt by Christ.
    - ✦ We are not ultimately motivated by guilt.
    - ✦ We are ultimately motivated by grace.

### The Necessity of Faith

- Faith in Christ involves surrender of all one's possessions to Christ.
  - ▶ For some of us, this means selling every possession we have to advance His kingdom.
  - ▶ For all of us, this means using every possession we have to advance His kingdom.
    - ✦ He is Lord over every decision we make.
    - ✦ He is Lord over every dollar we spend.
- Faith in Christ results in generosity toward people.
  - ▶ Faith in Christ reconciles us to God.
    - ✦ We no longer live for earthly treasure.
    - ✦ We now love our eternal treasure.
  - ▶ Faith in Christ reconciles us to one another.
    - ✦ We no longer live for selfish gain.
    - ✦ We now live with selfless generosity.

- No matter what they claim, those who neglect the poor are not the people of God.
  - The fruit of faith is concern for the poor.
  - To those who are not caring for the poor...
    - ✦ Repent of your sin.
    - ✦ Run to your Savior.
      - Hear His Word humbly.
      - Obey His Word quickly.
  
- God desires Christians to live simply and give sacrificially.
  - Living simply...
    - ✦ We stress moderation.
    - ✦ We limit consumption.
  - Giving sacrificially...
    - ✦ We share our possessions.
    - ✦ We sell our possessions.
    - ✦ We sacrifice our possessions.
  
- God desires the church to experience visible unity through voluntary generosity.
  - Visible unity...
    - ✦ We show the glory of Christ to our community by caring for the poor in the local church.
    - ✦ We show the glory of Christ to the world by caring for the poor in the global church.
  - Voluntary generosity...
    - ✦ We do not give out of obligation.
    - ✦ We give out of celebration.

### The Urgency of Eternity

- The Christian's use of money and possessions carries eternal consequences.
  - God will judge us in eternity according to our works, which includes our use of possessions.
    - ✦ Works ARE NOT a necessary basis or means of our justification.
    - ✦ Works ARE necessary evidence of our justification.
    - ✦ The Christian cannot say, "I'm saved, so I'll just get all I want on earth, and I'll have all I want in heaven."
  - God will reward us in eternity according to our works, which includes our use of possessions.
    - ✦ As we live for God's eternal glory...
    - ✦ We experience our eternal good.
    - ✦ The Christian cannot say, "Well, as long as I make it to heaven, that's what matters most."
  
- The Christian's use of money and possessions reveals eternal values.
  - The world uses money to store up earthly trinkets.
    - ✦ Value: Temporal satisfaction.
  - The Christian uses money to spread everlasting treasure.
    - ✦ Value: Eternal salvation.

- The Christian's use of money and possessions foreshadows eternal redemption.
  - ▶ Looking forward to the new creation...
    - ✦ A place of spiritual reconciliation.
    - ✦ A place of material restoration.
  - ▶ Living now as a new creation...
    - ✦ We use our resources to share the Gospel with lost masses.
    - ✦ We use our resources to show the Gospel to starving multitudes.
- Our use of money and possessions changes when we realize this world is not our home.
  - ▶ The purpose of life on earth is preparation for life in eternity.
  - ▶ What we need to remember...
    - ✦ Riches are fleeting.
    - ✦ Wealth is fading.
  - ▶ What we need to realize...
    - ✦ We are pilgrims on a journey.
    - ✦ We are citizens of another country.

## APPLICATIONS

### Two Foundations...

- God gives objective truth in Scripture.
- God gives subjective guidance through the Spirit.

### Four Exhortations...

- Do not compare...
  - ▶ The life of Christ is our standard.
- Do not despair...
  - ▶ The presence of Christ is our hope.
- Avoid apathy...
  - ▶ The joy of Christ is our possession.
- Avoid lethargy...
  - ▶ The glory of Christ is our goal.

### Ten Applications...

- Submit to Christ.
- Commit to the church.
- Work wisely.
- Live simply.
- Give sacrificially.
- Tithe willingly.
- Help constructively.
- Save humbly.
- Borrow sparingly.
- Invest eternally.

### Submit to Christ.

*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

Matthew 9:35-38

- See what He sees.
- Feel what He feels.
- Realize what He knows.
- Pray what He commands.
- Do what He says.

### Commit to the church.

- We are not alone.
  - ▶ Learn from each other.
  - ▶ Live for each other.

- We are on a mission.
  - ▶ A spiritual mission...
    - ✦ Preaching good news.
  - ▶ With social ramifications...
    - ✦ Addressing deep needs.
- We are not building a kingdom for us on earth.
- We are advancing the Kingdom of God on earth.

### Work wisely.

- As long as you are able, work hard.
- As much as you are able, gain wealth.
- NOTE: The Bible never encourages or validates retirement.
  - ▶ We don't save up money for a life spent on luxury.
  - ▶ We might save up money for a life spent on ministry.
  - ▶ Our hope is not in our retirement.
  - ▶ Our hope is in Christ's return.

### Live simply.

- God gives enough for us...
  - ▶ Identify your enough.

*“Christians should give away all but the plain necessities of life – that is, plain, wholesome food, clean clothes, and enough to carry on one’s business. . . . Any Christian who takes for himself anything more than the plain necessities of life lives in an open, habitual denial of the Lord. . . . He has gained both riches and hell-fire!”*

John Wesley

- ✦ Prioritize necessities.
- ✦ Minimize luxuries.
- ✦ Ask questions...
  - What possessions need to be shared?
  - What possessions need to be sold?
  - What possessions need to be sacrificed?
- God gives excess for others...
  - ▶ Isolate your excess.
    - ✦ God has given us extra not so that we can have more.
    - ✦ God has given us extra so that we can give more.
- Beware rationalization.
  - ▶ We can justify anything.
  - ▶ We can spiritualize anything.
- Beware confusion.
  - ▶ We do this not because things are bad.
  - ▶ We do this because people are in need.

- General guidelines...
  - ▶ Spend intentionally.
    - ✦ As I spend this money, am I acting as if I am its owner or its steward?
    - ✦ What Scripture requires me to spend money in this way?
    - ✦ Can I offer up this expenditure as a sacrifice to the Lord?
    - ✦ Will God reward me for this expenditure at the resurrection of the just?
  - ▶ Celebrate occasionally.
  - ▶ Speak accurately.

### Give sacrificially.

- One initial question...
  - ▶ Are you giving less than your ability, according to your ability, or beyond your ability?

*“I do not believe one can settle how much we ought to give. I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say they are too small. There ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.”*

C.S. Lewis

- Sacrificial giving is generous.
- Sacrificial giving is consistent.
- Sacrificial giving is voluntary.
- Sacrificial giving is excellent.
- Sacrificial giving is cheerful.
- Sacrificial giving is worshipful.
- Sacrificial giving is proportionate.
- Sacrificial giving is quiet.
- Sacrificial giving is honest.
- Sacrificial giving is purposeful.
  - ▶ Give in ways that are Gospel-centered.
  - ▶ Give in ways that are church-focused.
  - ▶ Give to people/churches/organizations with integrity.
  - ▶ Give to people/churches/organizations with reliability.
  - ▶ Give to people/churches/organizations with sustainability.
  - ▶ Give in ways that promote relational ministry.
  - ▶ Give in ways that you can connect with through personal ministry.
- One final question...
  - ▶ What would happen if we stopped asking how much we could spare and started asking how much it would take?

### Tithe willingly.

- There is no command to tithe under the new covenant.
  - ▶ Every New Testament example of giving goes beyond the tithe.
  - ▶ “Grace giving” in the New Testament involves greater sacrifice than giving in the Old Testament, not less.

- This is a helpful guideline, not a legalistic mandate.
  - ▶ Start your giving with 10% to your church.
    - ✦ This is the “floor” of giving.
  - ▶ Expand your giving with greater percentages according to your excess.
    - ✦ There is no “ceiling” on giving.
- Five reasons why tithing is a helpful guideline. . .
  - ▶ Tithing honors a biblical principle.
    - ✦ The Old Testament describes it.
    - ✦ Jesus endorses it.
  - ▶ Tithing reinforces the truth of God’s ownership.
  - ▶ Tithing reminds us of the accountability in our stewardship.
  - ▶ Tithing helps us in the constant battle with materialism.
  - ▶ Tithing aids us in our efforts to destroy greed in our hearts.

### Help constructively.

- Helping the poor is a responsibility of a Christian.

*“That bread which you keep belongs to the hungry; that coat which you preserve in your wardrobe, to the naked; those shoes which are rotting in your possessions, to the shoeless; that gold which you have hidden in the ground, to the needy. Wherefore, as often as you are able to help others, and refuse, so often did you do them wrong.”*

Augustine

*“Do not tell me, as a good man did today, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they my poor?”*

Ralph Waldo Emerson, on Self-Reliance

- Helping the poor is a mark of a church.

*“The impious Galileans support not only their own poor but ours as well; everyone can see that our people lack aid from us.”*

Roman Emperor Julian, Complaining about Christians

*“It is our care of the helpless, our practice of loving kindness that brands us in the eyes of many of our opponents. ‘Only look,’ they say, ‘look how they love one another!’”*

Tertullian

- Be focused.
  - ▶ Prioritize the church.
  - ▶ Evangelize the lost.
- Be wise.
  - ▶ We should not subsidize the irresponsible.
  - ▶ We should supplement the responsible.
- Be relational.
  - ▶ Give consistent accountability.
  - ▶ Give personal attention.
  - ▶ Give long-term commitment.

- Acknowledge diversity.
  - ▶ People are poor for different reasons.
    - ✦ Sinful personal choices
    - ✦ Unbiblical worldviews
    - ✦ Disasters
    - ✦ Lack of technology
    - ✦ Inequalities of Power
  - ▶ We must help the poor in different ways.
- Avoid excuses.
  - ▶ “I’m not doing anything to hurt the poor.”
    - ✦ God desires for His people to help the poor.
  - ▶ “But I’m just one person; what can I do?”
    - ✦ The logic that says, “I can’t do everything, so I won’t do anything” is straight from the pit of hell.
  - ▶ “I’m only responsible for helping people close to me.”
    - ✦ Yes, proximity is significant.
    - ✦ But, physical distance does not necessitate spiritual separation.

### Save humbly.

- There are good reasons to save. . .
  - ▶ To prepare for future expenditures.
  - ▶ To provide for expected (or sometimes unexpected) scenarios.
- There are bad reasons to save. . .
  - ▶ Greed
  - ▶ Fear
  - ▶ Worry
  - ▶ Pride
- Practice saving in a way that trusts in God.
- Avoid hoarding in a way that replaces God.
- In seeking to provide for future need, do not neglect dire present need.
- Questions to ask. . .
  - ▶ Is my saving reducing or increasing my dependence on God?
  - ▶ Is my saving going to help advance the kingdom of God?
  - ▶ Would it be wiser to use these funds to advance the kingdom of God amidst present need?

### Borrow sparingly.

- If you’re not in debt, avoid it.
  - ▶ It causes worry.
  - ▶ It denies reality.
  - ▶ It leads to dishonesty.
  - ▶ It creates addiction.
  - ▶ It robs God of the opportunity to provide through another means or push us in another direction.
  - ▶ It ties up resources that could be used to advance the kingdom.

*“And what does going into debt really mean? It means that God has not supplied your need. You trusted Him, but He has not given you the money; so you supply yourself, and borrow. If we can only wait right up to the time, God cannot lie God cannot forget: He is pledged to supply all your need.*

Hudson Taylor

- If you are in debt, pay it.

**Invest eternally.**

*“I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all. But whatever I have placed in God’s hands, that I still possess.”*

Martin Luther

- Realize...God’s return on your investment is better than anyone else’s.
- Remember...this world is not our home.

## THE GOSPEL AND PROSPERITY

*“Jesus, however, came to redeem us from Satan’s power and dominion over us. . . . We are to reign as kings in life. That means that we have dominion over our lives. We are to dominate, not to be dominated. Circumstances are not to dominate you. Poverty is not to rule and reign over you. You are to rule and reign over poverty. Disease and sickness are not to rule and reign over you. You are to rule and reign over sickness. We are to reign as kings in life by Christ Jesus, in whom we have our redemption.”*

Kenneth Hagin

### The Definition of the “Prosperity Gospel”...

- A theology which believes that God’s aim is to make believers healthy and wealthy in this life.
  - ▶ We enjoy excesses.
  - ▶ We live like Kings’ kids.

### The Deception of the “Prosperity Gospel”...

- The consistent error. . .
  - ▶ Ripping texts from contexts.

*Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health,  
as it goes well with your soul.*

3 John 2

- ♦ Does prayer guarantee health and wealth?

*Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.”*

Mark 10:29-30

- ♦ Have those who claimed the benefits paid the price?

*Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, 3 who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,*

Psalms 103:2-3

- ♦ Is this general praise or a guaranteed promise?

*As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful. But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation.*

*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*

*Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth. Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit.*

James 5:10-18

- ✦ Faith is patient in suffering.
  - Like a farmer...waiting for the harvest.
    - Trusting in God with what you cannot control.
    - Honoring God with what you can control.
  - Like a prophet... speaking the truth.
  - Like Job... hoping in God's purpose.
- ✦ Faith is prayerful in sorrow.
  - Pray when you are hurting.
  - Pray when you are happy.
  - Pray with the elders.
  - Pray with the church.
  - Confess your sins to each other.
    - Sin directly causes some sickness.
    - Sin indirectly causes all sickness.
  - Intercede on behalf of each other.
    - The secret to power and effectiveness in prayer...
      - Make your wants God's wants.
      - Ask for whatever you want.

■ The counter-examples...

- ▶ The life and teachings of Jesus
  - ✦ Not the "health and wealth gospel"
  - ✦ More like the "homeless and wounded gospel"
  - ✦ God may accomplish higher purposes in our death than in our life.

*And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."*

John 12:23-26

- ▶ The life and teachings of Paul
  - ✦ Not the "prosperity gospel"
  - ✦ More like the "adversity gospel"
  - ✦ God may accomplish higher purposes in our sickness than in our health.

*So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.*

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

*“When Paul was taken in chains from his filthy Roman dungeon and beheaded at the order of the opulent madman Nero, two representatives of humanity faced off, one of the best and one of the worst. One lived for prosperity on earth, the other didn’t. One now lives in prosperity in heaven, the other doesn’t.*

*We remember both men for what they truly were, which is why we name our sons  
Paul and our dogs Nero.”*

Randy Alcorn

### **The Dangers of the “Prosperity Gospel”...**

- It perverts our understanding of wealth.
  - ▶ Is wealth always a sign of God’s approval?
  - ▶ Is poverty always a sign of God’s disapproval?
  
- It disregards the purpose of wealth.
  - ▶ Does God give us more so that we can get more?
  - ▶ Or does God give us more so that we can give more?
  
- It minimizes the dangers of wealth.
  - ▶ Wealth is not just a blessing from the King; it is also a barrier to the kingdom.
  - ▶ It feeds the desire to be rich while Scripture forewarns us against the desire to be rich.
  
- It ignores the clear shift in Scripture from the Old Testament to the New Testament.
  - ▶ Regarding the commands of God...
    - + OT: Abundance of promises of material reward for spiritual obedience.
    - + NT: Lack of promises of material reward for spiritual obedience.
  - ▶ Regarding the place of worship...
    - + OT: Temple as building.
    - + NT: Temple as body.
  - ▶ Regarding the purpose of blessing...
    - + That the nations might come and see God’s glory.
    - + That God’s people might go and tell of God’s glory.
  
- It commends selfish luxury over selfless generosity.
  - ▶ It explicitly encourages people to indulge in pleasures.
  - ▶ It implicitly leads people to ignore the poor.
  
- It appeals to the desires of the flesh instead of calling people to deny the flesh.

*And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”*

Luke 9:23-24

*“So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple”*

Luke 14:33

- It encourages people to waste their lives on things that do not last.

*“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.”*

Matthew 6:19-21

- It exalts God’s gifts (things we receive from God) above God’s glory (the treasure we have in God).

*Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.”*

John 6:35

- It abuses God by making Him a means to an end.
  - ▶ Instead of trusting God for our needs, we use God for our wants.
  - ▶ Instead of God-centered intercession, prayer becomes man-centered coercion.
- It subtly infuses all of Christianity.
  - ▶ This is evident in how little we give.
  - ▶ This is evident in how much we own.
- It overlooks the design of suffering.
  - ▶ Christians may suffer despite their righteousness.
  - ▶ Christians may suffer because of their righteousness.
- It fails to acknowledge the necessity of suffering.

*“Remember the word that I said to you: ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.”*

John 15:20

*It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.*

Matthew 10:25

*strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.*

Acts 14:22

*The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs— heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.*

Romans 8:16-18

*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*

1 Peter 4:12-14

*Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,  
2 Timothy 3:12*

### **The Gospel, Prosperity, and Persecution...**

- Prayer for a wealthy church experiencing prosperity...

*“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.”*

Revelation 3:15-20

- ▶ God, help us to seek our treasure in Christ.
- ▶ God, help us to clothe our lives in Christ.
- ▶ God, help us to fix our eyes on Christ.
- ▶ God, help us not to turn away from Christ.

- Prayer for an impoverished church facing persecution...

*“I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich) and the slander of those who say that they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life.”*

Revelation 2:9-10

- ▶ God, give them faith that conquers fear.
  - ✦ In their poverty.
  - ✦ In their persecution.
- ▶ God, give them patience and perseverance.
- ▶ God, give them endurance to eternal life.

- Prayer for all of us amidst prosperity, poverty, or persecution...

- ▶ God, may our lives count on earth as our eyes are fixed on heaven.

## RECOMMENDED READING

If you are interested in further study of possessions and prosperity, the following resources are recommended. Many of these resources were foundational for the truths we explored in our study. Please note, however, that though these books are recommended, Dr. Platt does not necessarily agree with everything written in every one of them. We urge you to read and learn from these books, but at the same time, be wise in your reading to discern good teaching from men's opinions.

- ▶ Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions*
- ▶ Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*
- ▶ Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*
- ▶ Tim Keller, *Counterfeit Gods*
- ▶ Tim Keller, *Ministries of Mercy*
- ▶ John MacArthur, *Whose Money Is It, Anyway? A Biblical Guide to Using God's Wealth*
- ▶ Ben Witherington, *Jesus and Money: A Guide for Times of Financial Crisis*
- ▶ Ron Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*
- ▶ Wesley Willmer, *A Revolution in Generosity*
- ▶ Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: Alleviating Poverty Without Hurting the Poor... and Ourselves*
- ▶ Gordon Fee, *The Disease of the Health and Wealth Gospels*
- ▶ D.R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel: Biblical and Historical Insights into the Word of Faith Movement*

# About the Teacher

Dr. David Platt, 31, is deeply devoted to Christ and His Word. David's first love in ministry is disciple making - the simple biblical model of teaching God's Word, mentoring others and sharing faith. He has traveled extensively to teach the Bible to church leaders throughout the United States and around the world. Atlanta natives, he and his wife, Heather, made their home in New Orleans until they were displaced by flooding following Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

A life-long learner, David has earned two undergraduate and three advanced degrees. He holds a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism (A.B.J.) from the University of Georgia, and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.), Master of Theology (Th.M.) and Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He has previously served at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary as Dean of Chapel and Assistant Professor of Expository Preaching and Apologetics, and as Staff Evangelist at Edgewater Baptist Church in New Orleans.

David holds a deep and abiding passion for global disciple-making. "I believe that God has uniquely created every one of His people to impact the world. Some may count it as idealistic, but I believe it is thoroughly biblical, rooted in Psalm 67:1-2, yet covering Scripture from beginning to end. God is in the business of blessing His people so that His ways and His salvation might be made known among all people."

David practices what he preaches through his travel nationally and internationally, teaching from God's Word in churches, seminaries, the underground church or even under a shade tree in Africa or Latin America.

David and Heather were married in 1999. They are the parents of two sons, Caleb and Joshua.

# Brook Hills' Weekends

If you are not a part of Brook Hills we welcome you as our guest this evening. If you are not currently involved in a local church, we invite you to join us for worship gatherings and small groups at Brook Hills this week:

## SUNDAY SCHEDULE

8:00 a.m.	Adult Small Groups
9:00 a.m.	Small Groups for All Ages Worship Gathering
11:00 a.m.	Small Groups for All Ages Worship Gathering
6:00 p.m.	Worship Gathering

## SMALL GROUPS

Brook Hills Small Groups of 8-12 adults gather weekly for Bible study, prayer friend-building and ministry action. What's great about Small Groups is that they meet at all days, times and locations. Some meet on the church campus on Sundays, others meet in homes or area gathering places during the weekend—so there's one near you at a time and day that fit your family and schedule.

For a complete listing of Small Group opportunities, visit us online at [www.brookhills.org/local](http://www.brookhills.org/local), or stop by the Connection Central desk in the lobby to find assistance connecting to a group.

# Notes

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