

God, Money, Giving, and Asking

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“Jesus Christ said more about money than about any other single thing because, when it comes to a man’s real nature, money is of first importance. Money is an exact index to a man’s true character. All through Scripture there is an intimate correlation between the development of a man’s character and how he handles his money” *Richard Halverson, former chaplain, U.S. Senate*

A primary board member responsibility is managing the resources of your organization. Some would say board members are to give financially, get others to give, or get off the board. Why should a board member give? What motivates him or her to give? And, what would it take to have the stakeholders of your organization give so generously that the board would not worry about having enough resources? What does God’s Word have to say to Christian board members handling possessions in light of eternity?

We live in a culture saturated with materialism. Yet the church, seminaries, and believers as a whole are uncomfortable with the topic of money and possessions. It is the topic pastors say they least like to preach, lay people indicate fear of hearing a sermon on money is the reason they do not invite visitors to church, and a Lilly endowment study states few seminaries address the topic. In addition, fund raising by Christian organizations largely follow the secular model of whatever works. Robert Wuthnow’s research discovered that, “There is a kind of mental or emotional gloss to contemporary religious teaching about money that prevents them from having much impact on how people actually live their lives.” He also says that we “carve up our caring into little chunks that requires only a level of giving that does not conflict with our needs or interests as individuals.”

Despite this neglect, what we do with possessions has a huge impact on our eternal lives. While few Christians seem to take seriously what they do with their possessions, Scripture makes it clear in Romans 14:12 and 2 Corinthians 5:10 that we are all to give an account of our lives to God at the end of our earthly life. We will be asked to answer

questions about how we used our possessions such as: Where did it all go? What did you spend it on? What was accomplished for eternity through the use of all the stuff God entrusted to you here on earth?

Possessions and the spiritual development of our soul are very important topics to God. So important that 17 of the 38 parables of Christ were about possessions. In counting verses in Scripture, possessions are mentioned 2,172 times – three times more than love, seven times more than prayer, and eight times more than belief. About 15 percent of God’s word deals with possessions – treasures hidden in a field, pearls, talents, pounds, stables, etc. Assuming God knows what He is doing, the obvious conclusion is that the topic of possessions and our soul is very important to God and that He understood that believers would find this a difficult area of their life to turn over to Him.

Many of us feel that if we only had a little more money or possessions, then somehow our life would get straightened out. But perhaps there is something fundamentally faulty with this strategy of getting more and more. Even when we get a pay raise, we often don’t give any more for God’s work. What we need is a different starting place, a different assumption for our lives. That foundation is found when the priorities of life are rearranged so that God is put first in all areas of your life, including our stuff.

There are Christians for whom handling their possessions is an integral part of their spiritual lives. They have found a more solid foundation for their whole life – one that starts with their commitment to following Christ and serving God’s Kingdom by being generous. A good starting point is to understand how God views our possessions and our eternal soul.

Over the next six issues, we will examine the role of our possessions as tools, tests, and trademarks; the correlation between giving and spiritual maturity; practical ways in which you can learn to be a generous board member, and ways that your organization can promote Biblical generosity. Ultimately, we will see how these ideas

influence the manner in which fund raising should be conducted so that your organization is raising money in a manner pleasing to God.

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