

GOD'S INVESTMENT FUNDS

Treasure Principle #4

◆ **Intro:** Prolific author Stephen King made a speech at the Vassar College commencement on May 20, 2001. He entitled it "Scaring You to Action" and told how two years earlier he had been lying in a ditch by a country road, seriously injured after being hit by a van as he walked beside the road in June 1999. "I had a MasterCard in my wallet, but when you're lying in the ditch with broken glass in your hair, no one accepts MasterCard."

◆ On that day and in the following months, he got a painful but important insight into many of life's simple truths: "We came in naked and broke. We may be dressed when we go out, but we're just as broke." Of all the power most Americans have, King said, "the greatest is undoubtedly the power of compassion, the ability to give. We have enormous resources in this country...but they are only yours on loan, only yours to give for a short while.... I want you to consider making your lives one long gift to others, and why not? All you have is on loan anyway. All you want to get at the getting place, from the Maserati you may dream about to the retirement fund some broker will try to sell you on, none of that is real. All that lasts is what you pass on. The rest is smoke and mirrors."

◆ King invited the audience to imagine a typical American backyard, with mom, dad, and the kids enjoying a delicious barbecue next to their swimming pool. "And standing around that fence, looking in, are emaciated men and women, starving children. They are silent. They only watch."

◆ King was on to something that God has been saying in his word for a very long time. Money is to be used and not loved. Love people. Use money. If you love money you will use people, to get more of it. If you love people, you will use money. -Love is the fulfillment of all of God's law. Rick Warren

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described a helpful outline that I want to share with you today, about eternal investments. We might call it Purpose Driven stewardship. Or we could just call it God's investment strategies. You know the biblical purposes of the church. We have them in our statements. We studied them a few months ago: Lets see how many we can name... (Worship, Fellowship, Discipleship, Ministry, Mission). Since these are purposes that God gives our lives, and that God gives the Church, I think it's safe to say that they are also purposes of our treasures/time/talents.

◆1) Preliminary principle: God wants me to invest!

◆That means that God does not want me merely to take up space, to consume products, to ride the tide of enjoyment. Some churches teach this. Other churches teach that we really should not want anything at all; that it is almost wrong to desire to be blessed by God! (of course Timothy's name means just that!) Neither is right.

◆A. Jesus is not against investment. He is against bad investment.

◆“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21, NIV).

◆You will notice here that Jesus commands us here to invest but not in junk bonds. In good funds. He commands us not to set our hearts on the comforts and securities that money can afford. But on even more! More than 40 times in the gospel of Luke there are promises of reward and

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threats of punishment connected with the commands of Jesus. Here's one example:

◆ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. (Luke 6:35, NIV).

◆ In other words, God's command to you and me is in essence, "Stop caring about how well off you'll be on earth. Start wanting to be rewarded in heaven!" Ok, that said, how do we invest? Simply by using our treasure/time/talents to fulfill our life purposes. Lets break them up.

◆ **1. God wants me to invest in his treasury fund.**

◆ If you do any active investing you know that treasury funds are a whole category of investment vehicles. Well, God has a version too. Remember the text from Matthew that said "store up treasure in heaven"? Heaven is the place that God lives. Heaven is heaven because God's presence is so profound there. What goes on in heaven? Everyone enjoys the goodness of God there. Scripture frequently describes heaven in terms of people worshiping God. Careful here. Please do think of heaven as some decade long worship service. Just because people might be bored and boring here doesn't mean that's what it's like in heaven. Besides that, we maintain that coming to a sanctuary to worship is not the only time we worship. Worship is enjoying God and letting him know it. Christians do this on the job, in the woods, at home too!

◆ A. So how do we invest in heaven? We use our treasures to express worship to God. To worship is to love the Lord with all your heart. It is to

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give your heart to God. If you know God ought to have more of your heart, then start using your money to worship God! You know why? Where your treasure is, there goes your heart! That is, we think about what we invest in! Guess what! I never used to pray for donut companies. But then, oh about ten years ago I invested in Krispy Kreem Donuts. The stock price rose and split twice! I was praising God. But not praying for them. Then the stock price almost disappeared! Now I'm praying real hard for Krispy Kreem. The Bible says...

◆ Bring this tithe to the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored, and eat it there in his presence. This applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to fear the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy 14:23, NLT).

◆ Bringing your tithe to God's house was supposed to focus you on God. He doesn't really need your money. Your giving is first about what it does to your heart! You lack of giving to God is first a comment on your lack of passion for him. The ledgers and dollars and cents are superfluous at this point.

◆ B. Let me share a few ideas about investing in worship of God.

◆ 1) My giving begins in my local place of worship. We just saw that in Deuteronomy 14. You might like to underline the phrase "in the place the Lord...chooses." That's the church where you go to worship! The Apostle Paul says something similar in the New Testament.

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◆ *On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. (1 Corinthians 16:2, NIV).*

◆2) What's the first day of the week? Sunday. The day of worship for Christians. Now there are a few other things in what Paul says about worship giving. my giving to God is a patterned act of worship ("first day of every week"). It's a very tangible, weekly reminder that God is number one every week of my life! Some folks prefer to give once a year, or once a quarter. Your argument is with the apostle Paul. God didn't direct us to worship him once a year, or even quarterly. He said to do it every seven days. In God's vast understanding of the creatures he created, he knows that seven days without putting him first makes one "weak".

◆ *The purpose of tithing is to teach you to always put God first in your lives. (Dt. 14:23 LB)*

◆3) My giving is a planned act of worship. Paul said to put aside funds to share. This is not spontaneous. This is premeditated loving of God. This is thinking about the object of your love and getting ready to present your love. It's what a wife is feeling when a man comes home with an anniversary gift. She says, "Oh how sweet. You remembered!" She knows he was thinking about her. It's especially meaningful when he brings home the anniversary gift on the right date!

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◆4) My giving is a proportional act of worship (note: “in proportion with his income” 1Cor.16:2). If you are making millions of dollars then your responsibility to God is a tithe on millions. If your work a hot dog concession stand, well your responsibility is a tithe on a different story.

◆Now it is certainly true that God allows us personal choice and discretion in handing out his wealth. But when we give to his church we should be wary of controlled charity. When we freely give to a ministry we are saying, “Here God, let your church use your money. I don’t have to control it. I don’t have to be on the throne. I know you will do good.”

◆Sometimes we are very skilled at staying on the throne. We make all kinds of stipulations with our giving as though we are voting with our money. “I don’t want any of my offerings to go to that certain missionary, or that certain school with that one teacher I don’t like, even though the church funds it.” Or, “I’ll give \$5000 if the church will use it for pea-green carpeting in the foyer and put a memorial to Aunt Sue on the wall by the drinking fountain.” *Wait a minute. Is that using our money to worship God, or our own selves?*

◆God wants us to use his money to worship him, to invest in his treasury fund.

◆SING WORSHIP SONG HERE...

◆**2. God wants me to invest in his mutual fund.**

◆*love one another with **mutual** affection; outdo one another in showing honor. Ro 12:10 NRSV*

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- ◆ Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for **mutual** upbuilding. Ro 14:19 NRSV
- ◆ This now is when we use God's treasure to encourage fellowship. God wants us to make the reality of our faith visible in his family. Have you ever gone somewhere like downtown Chicago and walked the store fronts? Maybe Macy's, or Marshall Fields? They're famous for the winter displays. Well the church family is supposed to be like the store windows: a display of God's glory.
 - ◆ *Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." (John 13:35, NLT).*
 - ◆ They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD **for the display** of his splendour. Isa.61:3
- ◆ B. If you are a part of God's family, use your treasures, talents, and time to create fellowship and to display God's love.
 - ◆ You might send people cards. You might pay for a babysitter for a young couple to be able to get out on a date. You might open your home and provide food, have someone over for pizza and don't fret about how much it will cost you. (You know how it warms you heart to be invited over. So, do the same for another. It is creating fellowship, a value of God and one of your purposes on the earth!
 - ◆ SING FELLOWSHIP SONG HERE...
- ◆ **3. God wants me to invest in his growth fund.** This fund is about spiritual growth. We call it discipleship.

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◆ Grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. 2Pet. 3:18

◆ We already know this is one of our purposes. Now we have to decide to use our wealth to pursue it. Now growth funds invest in riskier stocks than say, balanced funds. On Wall Street they fluctuate more in price but over the long haul the yield is greater. Well, it's risky to try and grow spiritually. That's why many are hesitant to invest in it. God might tell us to change something about us! This in turn may imply that my problems in life are not all my boss, my spouse, or my neighbors and kids! And while we rejoice that God accepts us and saves us just the way we are, we also know that he did not save us to leave us just the way we are.

◆ God did not speak his saving love to you as a crabby person to create a saved crabby person. God did not call to you in your alcoholism to make you a saved drunk person. God did not invite you into his family content with you to be a greedy person who will not be greedy in heaven someday. Listen to how Paul talks about spiritual growth.

◆ "Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.... Only let us live up to what we have already attained." Philipians 3:13-16, NIV.

◆ B. Investing in the growth fund is hard, risky work. It takes time and attention. It takes effort. Holiness is not automatic. God lets you cooperate. So then, use your treasure to invest in growth.

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- ◆ We are thinking a bit differently now about using our wealth for God. Sometimes people think that all God is interested in is our giving a hunk of cash to the church. And then we ourselves can go and spend our days making money, and our nights nights in the bar, and our free time trying to be like the folks in People Magazine.
- ◆ Listen. Use your money to enhance your godly character. Use your time, talents, treasure to become like Christ! It's easier to use our wealth for comfort over character but your character is far more important than your comfort. God is more concerned with what's going on inside your mind and heart than what your knees and hands are doing on a Sunday morning. And God is more honored by you when you are patient with a rude co-worker than when you smile nice in a church foyer.
- ◆ We'll stop here for today. Next week we'll start making some application of investing in growth funds.
 - ◆ *Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen, and I will tell you where to get food that is good for the soul! Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. ... Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near..... Isa.55:2,3,6*
- ◆ SING DISCIPLESHIP SONG HERE... (Take My Life/Holiness)