

The High Privilege of Being God's Steward: A Biblical Theology for Enjoying "Stuff"

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[0 : 00] Amen. The Lord is faithful and he is good and kind. Now.

As you can see on the screen as it comes up, the title of my message is the high privilege of being God's steward. Or. The subtitle here, a biblical theology for enjoying stuff, for enjoying stuff.

All right. I've been in Williamsburg for seven and a half years, right? Is that right, Suzanne? About seven and a half years. I've been pastoring here among what we have reconstituted as Grace Church Williamsburg for about three and a half of those years.

And in all of that time, I can't remember preaching a single sermon on. Money. I'm so sorry you guys visited and the preacher's preaching about money.

That's the thing. That's the reputation we get. All right. Well, let me work through this introduction with you and you'll see what I'm getting at as I talk about this.

[1 : 18] But I want to talk to you about stewardship. Now, the Bible, the Bible has a good bit to say about money. Believe it or not, it really does. Jesus had a good bit to say about money.

And when preachers, when preachers come to the place of preaching about money, we're going to face the facts. We've kind of shot ourselves in the foot. And the reason is because preachers seem to have secured a reputation of using the pulpit.

Unfortunately, this is true to manipulate people for money. Now, not all preachers, and I certainly hope not the preacher you're looking at now. But it's certainly true with some high profile preachers of our day.

I can say that pretty confidently. Many of them are on the television and this is the mantra that they give you. So not all guys on the television or the radio are doing this, but some they'll tell you things like this.

If if you will give your money to this ministry, then God will pour out his blessings on you. And so it becomes this obligatory thing. You can obligate God to bless you and give to you if you'll just give to this ministry.

[2 : 29] Now go ahead and put your hand up on the screen and I'll put my hand up and we'll touch hands. And then that will bring the through the screen. And that's the nonsense that you hear about today.

Well, I don't want to answer to the Lord for maligning his word. I don't. I don't want to answer the Lord for misusing this pulpit, for manipulating his people or for misrepresenting the pastorate.

So no matter what I'm preaching about, I want to be sure thus saith the Lord. And I recognize every time I take the pulpit, it's really not about being a blessing to you.

I hope that that happens as a result of what I'm about to say. I take the pulpit because I want to preach to please Jesus. If I'll concentrate on preaching to please Jesus, you'll receive a blessing at some point or another.

All right. Well, that's what this is all about. That's what we'll try to keep it about. So this this is not a sermon about the preacher begging you for money. That's not what this is.

[3 : 37] This is not a sermon trying to guilt you for more money. Greg and I haven't come to plan behind the scenes so that we hooked up and said, hey, you know, we're not doing so well financially.

You better get up there and say some stuff about these people giving. That's not what this is. We're blessed here at Grace. God is blessing us in many different ways. And your faithfulness in giving is one of the evidences of God blessing this church family.

And we're very grateful for God doing that through our myths. So I'm not trying to play to your greed by telling you that if you'll give more, you'll get more.

That's not what this is about. This is not a sermon about what everyone else is doing with their money, quote unquote. And it's not a sermon about the evils of money.

We know that money in and of itself isn't a bad thing. It's a good tool, something that we all need and we use on this earth. It's the love of money and greed that gets in the way so that money becomes an idol.

[4 : 43] In fact, folks, this really isn't a sermon about money, strictly speaking. So what is it about then? Why am I doing all of this? Well, I want to show you up here on the screen.

This is a sermon about honor. It's a sermon about worship. It's a sermon about service properly rendered to God by his chosen beloved servants here at Grace Church Williamsburg.

Greg and I, as fellow pastors, are concerned that we shepherd the flock well here at Grace. We're not responsible for what's going on in churches around our community, but we are here.

And this is one of the topics that it seemed right now to talk about just to keep us focused, to keep us reminded about the fact that we are doing well and that God is blessing.

And we don't want to ignore the reality of God's goodness and all of that, folks. Let me just tell you a quick story before I move on. It wasn't too long. Greg, you might have to help me with the timing.

[5 : 44] Well, Mariva, you might have to help us. Greg and I together have half a memory.

Together. So what? Maybe three years ago, maybe, we were at a point where we didn't even know if we were going to be able to keep going.

Is that about the right timing? About two and a half to three years ago. Grace Church, we didn't even know if we were going to be able to keep the doors open and if I wasn't going to have to go find something else or whatever.

We were scrambling to try to think through that and pray through that in the Lord. And today, not only are you able to see the Lord blessed and take care of Suzanne and I, as I'm the only vocationally paid member of our church.

Greg has a job in the secular world and pastors on top of all of that. But God is blessing us in ways that we are able to begin to see plans that we've prayed about for literally years begin to take shape and begin to come to fruition.

I'm talking about missions efforts. Various projects locally and internationally that we want to see blossom as a result of us gathering together and ministering the Great Commission.

[7 : 06] Go into all the world, make disciples. That's what we want to be about here at Grace. And we have been, but we've been fairly limited. Things seem to begin to start opening up as they do.

Greg and I just want to keep you reminded that giving is part of how we worship the Lord. Now, here at Grace, you'll notice I'll finish this sermon.

We'll sing another song. Greg will come, God willing, and pray and we'll be dismissed. Nobody passed an offering plate. That's not because we don't think giving is part of worship.

We don't put you in a position of highlighting that in your giving in the service itself. We have a box at the back. You can put your giving there. You can do your giving electronically.

There are several different ways that you guys are faithful to give to our church family. So the fact that we keep it low key doesn't mean it's not important. And God's blessed us.

[8 : 02] He's blessed us in this. So I want to make sure that you understand from our perspective as your pastors, that this is all a good and positive thing as we praise God and thank him for what he's doing.

Now, in that vein, look, the Bible tells us to walk as children of the light, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.

So each of us needs to come to the word of God, and we need to humbly ask the Lord to help us learn what response would please him as his stewards.

So each of you, this is another way of saying each of you, has the individual privilege and responsibility to measure what God has entrusted to you and how you are to give back to God as an attitude of worship and gratitude in that way.

We don't come and tell you what percentage to give. We don't come and look it over and say, oh, somebody's falling short right here. We better get with them. Now, you know there are denominations that do that?

[9 : 08] Hey, absolutely. You get a notice in the mail, and if you don't respond, the God squad shows up at your door to make sure that you get that straightened out.

That's right. So I intend to do a part tour on this next week and talk to you more about the approach that we take at grace called grace giving.

More on that. More on that next week. But we want to come to the word of God to help us frame how we understand giving to God in an attitude of gratitude. So we need to begin that process with informing our hearts at the point where we are, I think, in my view of this from scripture, the most tempted regarding this area of stewardship.

Not just financial stewardship, but stewardship of all that God's entrusted to us. Where are we most tempted? And it's at this point. It's at the point of who owns the stuff of this life.

It becomes a heart attitude of ownership. Who really owns the stuff that I have? And by stuff, I mean the material resources, the goods and the treasures of your earthly existence.

[10 : 25] So this is going to be a busy sermon. I told Suzanne after I'd prepared it over the last couple days or so and finished it up. I was tweaking it yesterday. And I told her, I said, boy, I tell you, if this sermon was put across to some of the guys I know who write the books on how to preach sermons and all, they would mark this thing up.

There'd be so much red on it. It's not because it's a bad sermon necessarily. It's because it's busy. I'm going to use a lot of scripture with you. This is atypical of me. The last couple weeks, I've been working through themes and topics of scripture using a number of passages.

You don't have to do it that way, but I've done it that way this time. Usually, I'll take a book of the Bible and work verse by verse by verse by verse through the entire book. We're going to get back to that, I promise.

Just let me do these couple of things and then I can move on with a clear conscience. All right? So this is going to be a little bit busy, but I hope that you'll be able to track with me and see why I'm giving you as many verses as I do.

So, without further ado, let's jump into it together. The way that we're going to deal with this first aspect of who owns what and our hearts thinking in terms of ownership.

[11 : 38] This is my stuff. That kind of thing. We're going to start here. We're going to start with biblical foundations for faithful stewardship and the reality that God owns all things.

We got to start right there. Appropriately, we start with God. And it's the reality that God owns all things. I'm going to give you two items in this foundation for faithful stewardship.

Two perspectives in this foundation thing. The first, God owns all things. And I want to show you some scriptures and have you turn there. So, I'll put the references up here, but not write them out for you.

First of all, all of creation belongs to God. So, go to Psalm 24-1 with me, if you will. We'll be turning to these together. Excuse me.

Psalm 24-1 is very straightforward and it reads, The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it.

[12 : 40] Now, that covers it, doesn't it? You'd think, all right, let's move on to the next one. But remember, in our call to worship this morning, we had another verse that spoke to this very reality.

That the earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world and those who dwell in it. And it's Psalm 89-11. The heavens are yours.

The earth also is yours. The world and all it contains. You have founded them. That's why we're going here as the foundation.

Now, you and I both understand, friends, that most of the unbelieving world has no concept of this whatsoever. That God owns all things, do they?

They don't acknowledge it. Most of the world spends their time trying to get stuff and then hold on to it and increase it. Thinking that the stuff that they have is the stuff of life.

[13 : 37] But we're going to see it's not. That's a ploy of Satan. To keep the unbelievers focused on the wrong things. Now, another thing. God owns all things.

He owns all kingdoms and governments. That's in the New Testament in Colossians. So you'll just give me time to turn there with you each time we change it up here.

In Colossians 1, verse 16, it says, For by him all things were created. That is, Christ Jesus here is the reference. For by him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible.

Boy, that covers a lot. Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through Christ and for Christ.

That's really powerful. Then, also, you'll see God created and he owns you.

[14:43] You don't even belong to yourself. Now, again, unbelievers have also been created by God. They bear the image of God, but they don't recognize it. They don't live by it or honor the Lord in it.

But believers should. That's 1 Corinthians. Chapter 6. Excuse me.

Verses 19 and 20. Paul is arguing through this passage that your physical body belongs to God and that you are a temple of the Holy Spirit.

And he comes to 19 and 20. Or do you not know? Do you not understand, realize, and accept that your physical body is a temple, a housing of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own.

For you have been bought with a price. Therefore, in that reality that you don't belong to yourself and you've been bought with a price, glorify God in your body.

[15:53] Use all that you are and all that God is making you to be in Christ to bring honor and glory to God. Folks, that really does sum it up. That brings us to the place where we now understand our purpose in life.

See, we're not like unbelieving people who are constantly running around and swimming around trying to figure out why I'm here. This is why we're here. It's to glorify God.

That's why we exist. To bring glory. You say, now, Jeff, what does it mean to glorify God? We hear preachers say that a lot. Christians throw that around. We see it in books. To glorify God simply means this.

This is the most simple way I know to explain it for us. It's to reflect God's character in your life. The best way to glorify God, the highest way that we glorify God is to live like Jesus.

In the way that we speak, in the way that we behave, in the way that we relate to other people, in the priorities we have in life. As the world looks in and sees us use the stuff of life, that we're using it to God's glory.

[16:56] That's why do you sit down and say the blessing before you eat? Hopefully, it's because you want to reflect a thankful heart to God because you know that that was provided for you by the Lord.

God makes it possible for you to have that. So you stop long enough to remind your own heart where all this comes from. God is good in that, isn't he? All right.

And then in 1 Corinthians chapter 8, excuse me, verse 6. I'm struggling with these allergies things, I think. 1 Corinthians 8, 6.

Where is it? Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and we exist through him.

That's a memory verse, isn't it? That's powerful. That's good. All things are created by God, and God has created you, and he owns you.

[18:04] Now, how about this one? All things come from, come through, and are for Jesus Christ. Back in the book of Romans, chapter 11, verse 36.

For from him and through him and to him are all things.

To him be the glory forever. Amen. You see, all of life is about him. All that we have is from him. All that we have is to be made available to him.

And all that we do is to be done through him and for him. Now, this is wonderful to rehearse this. I love this little exercise. And then finally, this last one.

God created and owns all things. Now, we're back up to the top again where we started, and that's Revelation. Appropriately the last book of the Bible. Everything starts and moves and has its being and ends in God.

[19:13] Worthy are you, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things.

And because of your will, they existed and were created. It was God's idea to make all of this. And it's God's idea to sustain it and to sustain us in it.

And as he does that, we're called on by God to glorify him. Now, here's the question and the inference that we've been making through all of this little exercise.

Since God made all things, owns all things, and watches over all things that he owns and that he has, as a believer, what does that make you in relationship to God?

And the answer is here. The answer is you are a steward of what God entrusts to you. Because God owns it all and makes it all and uses it all and entrusts some of it to you, you become a steward of what belongs to God.

[20 : 29] Even your own body. You are a steward of your own body because your body belongs to the Lord, not to you. Wow.

Challenging. It really puts a good biblical spin on how we think about exercise and diet and all that. In the world today, if you're not this live, curvy, if you're a woman, curvy kind of person, you know, with perfect skin, then you're somehow flawed.

So 99.9% of all of us are flawed as females if you don't look like that. So you better do something about it. You better get out there and buy all the diet programs and buy all the exercise routines and spend a lot of money on all the stuff to doll yourself up.

If you're a guy, it's, you know, you got to be the perfect physique of, you know, Apollos or whatever it is. I try not to pay too much attention to all of that. But I do see it from time to time.

And it's all nonsense. And they make billions of dollars over all of that. Guilting us. Making us feel like, you know, we don't fit in. Your body belongs to the Lord.

[21 : 41] Take care of it. Be reasonable. Be realistic. And be thankful. All right. So you are a steward of what God entrusts to you. Now, a steward is anyone who acts as the manager of a household or an estate.

Typically, it doesn't have to be, but typically we think of being a steward or a manager as managing and helping or taking care of the property or the goods of another person.

But you're a steward of your body. You're a steward of the stuff God gives to you as well. Just as long as you understand the concept holds. And that's what I want to show you next.

But what about the unique realities and aspects of a biblical steward? What's that all about? Here it is. A biblical steward has a stewardship from God.

Which involves, quote, the careful management of the resources of the kingdom of God, which have been entrusted to a person or a group.

[22 : 44] That's the difference between just being a steward in the world and trying to manage your money. Right? Lots of people do that. They make investments. They do all kinds of things. But a biblical steward is carefully seeking to manage the resources that he understands are the resources of the kingdom of God on this earth.

And he wants to do that in a way. She wants to do that in a way that brings honor to the Lord and reflects a thankful, humble, receptive heart in that process.

So believers, Christians are servants of Christ and stewards of his truth. Very important reality. We are servants of Jesus and we are stewards of God's truth.

So you see, I'm not just talking about money, am I? I've mentioned all kinds of things in this mix. Money being one of them. First Corinthians chapter four.

Verses one and two. Would you turn there with me? And you say, Jeff, you've thrown a lot of scripture at us already and we're barely out of the introduction.

[23 : 56] You expect us to remember all this? No, I don't. I just I just hope that by doing this this time together like this, the way I'm doing it, it'll there's so many people see it.

Maybe one or two of these verses will land in your heart and it'll be the one you hold on to, whereas your neighbor held on to the one two times before it. Whatever. It's OK. I just want you to see the truth as it's displayed here in scripture.

And God willing, all of what you see in the way of these slides will be up on the website in conjunction with the sermon within a week or so.

Hopefully I'm looking at my wife back there and she's going. We're working on that. It's a work in progress. First Corinthians four, one and two. Let a man.

Regard us in this manner. As servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found.

[24 : 59] Trustworthy. So in this section of scripture, Paul refers to himself. And then in the previous context of the few verses just before, Apollos and Cephas or Peter.

As galley slaves. Galley slaves would be the literal rendering of servants under rowers. So he's he's getting these people who would have been very familiar with this to picture in their minds a ship that

had oars and down in the belly of the ship.

We have oarsmen and their galley slaves. They're rowing. And that's what they do. That Paul said that's we we're servants of Christ in that way. We're the under rowers. Serving Jesus.

And then he goes on to say we are stewards. Stewards. Literally household managers. Now, you know who he's referring to here?

Apostles. Pastors. As it passes down, as Greg and I become the under shepherds serving you, Grace Church Williamsburg.

[26 : 11] We are galley slaves. That's what we are. We are household managers. We're managing what belongs to God. We're stewarding what belongs to God.

The truth of the word of God and you. You don't belong to us. Sometimes when I'm talking to other pastors, I'll say my my people or my church family.

But I don't mean that literally as if I possess you. I just I'm speaking about my responsibility toward you and the privilege I have to join with Greg and help care for your souls.

Pastors. Pastors. Pastors then are servant stewards. Who, as with other areas in life, set the example for that servant stewardship to God and to his people.

So here it is, folks. It's an example of humble service and trustworthy, faithful stewardship of God's word. And yet each of us have this servant stewardship laid before us as well.

[27 : 15] I don't want you to think, well, that just applies to the pastors. This is something that God says about you as well. We see it in a different place. But still, it comes through very clearly and it's in first Peter 4:10.

So toward the back of the Bible now. You should be familiar with first Peter since we went through this verse by verse just a few months ago. We ended it up.

First Peter 4 verse 10. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

So this is for you and for me. For us as God's people. We each have received a special gift. So we are to employ it, use it, apply it in serving each other here at this church.

And we are to do that as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. We have a stewardship given to us by God himself.

[28 : 28] So I'll put this up here for you to kind of jump in with me. While anyone can be a steward, Peter tells us. That believers have a special stewardship of the manifold.

That is the multicolored, multifaceted grace of God. God's gifts of special enablement are what we're talking about. Gifts given by the Holy Spirit at work in us.

Each one of you as a believer coming to this church, being members of this church. Each one of you have been given a special spiritual enablement. I don't know what it is necessarily.

Trying to figure it out. Trying to learn. Watching your life. Interacting with you. But each one of you have at least one special spiritual enablement. Called a spiritual gift.

That God has given you for the building up of the body of Christ. You have been given that gift. Not to get rich. Not to use it out in life in whatever way you deem fit.

[29 : 29] But God's given it to you to bring that gift into service to him. As you serve, what did Peter say? One another in that gift. So friends, what's at stake?

When you're not using your special spiritual enablement to serve the body of Christ. The body of Christ loses. We're missing that element in our church from your life.

You say, well Jeff, that's okay. As the church grows and there becomes more and more of us. You'll probably have two, three, four, five other people that have a gift like mine. That's fine. But do you also understand?

That God nuances those gifts for each and every one of us. Even the gift of teaching is displayed at different levels and in different ways.

So that the way that I teach looks a little bit different from the way Greg teaches and preaches. Etc. We're nuanced. You see? So you win when your fellow pastor Greg takes the pulpit.

[30 : 26] When he comes to teach you on Wednesday night. As we share the pulpit together. As we share the teaching moments together. You are more enriched and full orb'd in what you receive from God.

As each of us share that giftedness together. You win by that. But you lose when some of us with these gifts bow out.

And don't practice that gift. Now I'm taking time to say that for you. See I'm not in my notes. I'm taking time to say all that to you. Because I'm looking at faces that may be unfamiliar with some of these concepts.

From scripture. And I want us all to realize what's at stake in this steward. You have a stewardship from God. God. And in one way. It's all about the giftedness that God puts in you.

So that you can be a blessing to a local church. And serve that church. Say Jeff I don't know what my gift is. How do I find out? You get involved in a local church and start serving.

[31 : 29] And before long people will say things like this to you. Yeah I don't. That one not so much. But you know this one over here. I see. I see that you know. That's how it happened with me. I'm in this pulpit because God's people were faithful to talk to me about that and challenge me.

It scared me to death. I was like I ain't no preacher. I had to have the affirmations of God's people to even come to realize that I. This this was something that God put in me to do.

All right. Anyone can be a steward. But God has given us as believers this special enablement. So a biblical steward. I think I have it up there.

Yep. A biblical steward belongs to God and manages what belongs to God. Money, people, spiritual gifts, truth, time, material gifts, whatever.

Everything that God gives to us is to be stewarded to his glory. Amen. Everything. Everything.

Someone. Catch this. Someone once asked John D. Rockefeller.

[32 : 35] Everybody familiar with how rich and famous John D. All right. Big, big money. John D. Rockefeller. He funded projects all over the United States and then across the oceans.

This guy had deep, deep, deep pockets. They once asked him, his accountant, how much money did John D. leave when he died? And the accountant replied, all of it.

All of it. Isn't that right? How much of your stuff are you going to leave behind when you die? How much of it? All of it. Every single bit of it.

He left behind all of what he had, just like you and I will. Now, there is a story Jesus told that reflects that same reality.

It's a sobering call for us to steward God's stuff with integrity and with heavenly mindedness. What does that mean? That means with a kingdom mentality, with a heart and a mind that has a view toward, a front of your mind view toward the things of heaven.

[33 : 47] Remembering that I'm on this earth, living, breathing and walking, moving and having my being because God is with me. And I owe God everything. I owe him my salvation, my life, the air that I breathe.

I owe him my life. So I'm here to honor God. So I keep a heavenly mindedness about everything going on in my life and try to interpret it that way. And the story that Jesus used, and we're, don't worry.

Usually when we go to places like this in scripture, I take a while and I just unpack it and go all the way through it. We're going to hit the highlights. But I want to share it with you as a story that Jesus told about a man.

It's in Luke chapter 12. So here's the story that relates to the concepts that we're talking about regarding stewardship.

And not just money, but Jesus is going to focus on this guy's attitude toward all this. Luke chapter 12, beginning in verse 13. Now catch this. Someone in the crowd said to Jesus in a moment when he's teaching, Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.

[35 : 00] But Jesus said to him, man, or this would be something that might sound like this in our vernacular today. Mister? Man? Mister?

Who appointed me a judge or arbiter over you? Arbitrator. Then Jesus said to them, beware and be on your guard against every form of greed.

For not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions. And then Jesus told them a parable. So here comes the parable, the story, to help them better understand what he's saying.

And he says, you better guard your heart from every form of greed. The land of a rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself.

That's very dangerous. What shall I? In other words, he's not turning to truth. He's turning to himself. What shall I do? Since I have no place to store my crops.

[35 : 59] Then he said, ah, this is what I will do. I will tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I will store all my grain and my goods.

Stop there. The reason he's going to tear everything down and rebuild it, which I would think, that is ridiculous. What are you doing? You've got more money than cents. The reason he's going to do that is because he doesn't want to take up any other valuable space for his crops.

See? Every little inch of land is money. So I'll tear down the ones I have and build bigger ones on that same footprint. We'll just go up. Verse 19.

And I will say to my soul after doing that, soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come. Take your ease. Eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him.

Now see, if he'd have started there first. If he'd have started and said, you know what? It really doesn't matter what I think or what I say to myself. What does God say? But God said to him, you fool.

[37 : 01] Boy, that's strong. This very night your soul is required of you. And now who will own what you have prepared? So is the man who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.

There it is. Then he said this to his disciples. For this reason, I say to you, do not worry about your life as to what you will eat, nor for your body as to what you will put on.

For life is more than food and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap. They have no storeroom nor barn.

And yet God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than the birds? Which of you, by worrying, can add a single hour to his lifespan?

If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters? Consider the lilies, how they grow. They neither toil nor spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

[38 : 09] But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown in the furnace, how much more will he clothe you?

You men of little faith. And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink. And do not keep worrying for all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek.

But your father knows that you need these things. But seek his kingdom and these things will be added to you. Do not be afraid, little flock, for your father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

Boy, that's just beautiful. Sell your possessions and give to charity. Make yourselves money belts, which do not wear out. An unfailing treasure in heaven where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. What in the world is going on in this passage?

[39 : 14] Again, if we were working our way verse by verse through this passage, it'd probably take me at least three sermons to get through all of that. But we're just going to hit the highlights. So here's where we're going to take this now as we use this story to help us better understand some do's and don'ts as we build a theology of stewardship.

Look at this. Biblical perspectives for stewardship is where we want to take this. We talked about foundations. God owns everything, even you. And now biblical perspectives.

A greedy fool lays up treasures on earth. Now, I'm using that word fool. I'm not trying to throw stones or anything. I'm just using the same words Jesus used.

A greedy fool lays up treasures on earth. If you look at verse 13 again with me, there's this guy in the crowd. Jesus has been teaching on some very, very important things, spiritual things.

In the previous context. And now this guy interrupts Jesus as a rabbi. He interrupts Jesus. With this really ridiculous thing.

[40 : 25] He just yells out, teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me. Okay. Okay. What's that about? Well, look at this.

As we think about this together and what this guy's doing, Jesus sitting here teaching and trying to help these people understand spiritual matters in spiritual ways. Look.

Greed. Greed. Poisons your perspective toward relationships. And that's what we're seeing here. Now, now, please don't immediately think, well, I'm not greedy.

I'm not greedy. We're all greedy. We all have this bug of greed in our heart. And we need to be on guard about it. The first thing Satan will do is come and attack you when you're not aware. I do have a greedy heart. To some extent. And I need the Lord to help root that out in my life and keep me honest about it as I serve him. So, look. Greed poisons your perspective toward relationships.

[41 : 29] And here's what we're going to see first. It does it with family. This was his brother's money by God's account. Now, I'm not going to turn to Deuteronomy. You just have the reference there.

Deuteronomy, in this particular instance, is talking about the principle that God laid down for the firstborn to receive the inheritance. And it's up to the firstborn to do with it whatever he wills to do. Okay? And in this particular case, it says that man has two wives. Now, just blow by polygamy. I can't do that right now. I don't have time. A man had two wives.

He loved one and not so much the other. And so, the other that he didn't love so much had the firstborn son. And so, the scripture here in Deuteronomy says, now, don't do what I know you're going to do.

Because you love the other one and you want to favor her, she's going to have the son after that one. You can't give the one you love more, that son, the money. You got to give it to the first one, the one you don't love so much, that had the firstborn son.

[42 : 30] That's the way this thing works. God had to tell people that. That's the greed. That's what we do. So, this is laying down the principle. So, this guy comes, tell my brother to give me the money.

Because he's followed, perhaps he's followed the Jewish principle. He's the firstborn and he got the money. And now he says, hey, tell him to do the right thing. Give me some of it. Just right there, right out in front of everybody.

Now, we know this is bad because look what Jesus says next. Man, who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you? And then he starts the teaching. Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed.

How'd you like to be that guy who shouted all that in front of everybody? Now, he's called out by Jesus himself. Beware of every form of greed. See, greed takes all kinds of forms, doesn't it? It's sneaky. It's sneaky. Another thing that we see is that greed poisons your perspective toward and with God.

[43 : 30] This was God's money by God's right. And since we've already looked at Psalm 89, 11 several times, I'll just leave it. God owns everything. That's what the verse says. This was God's money.

But this man wasn't acknowledging that. So in this particular instance, Jesus was nothing more than someone this greedy man of verse 13 could use to get what he wanted.

And lots of people see Jesus that way. As a genie to get. You hear this in certain denominations preached all the time where they tell you, give to God.

They even say things like this. Now, I actually had a man in a certain denomination who used to live next to me. He actually told me this. And the reason he did is he knew I was a pastor. And he said, Jeff, I wanted to share this with you and see what you thought about this.

And he didn't betray whether he agreed with it or not. He just said, I want to see what you thought. And here's what he told me. He said, we have in our church this idea that you need to give to the church and you especially need to make sure you're giving to your pastor.

[44 : 33] Because the more you give to your pastor and do for your pastor financially, the more it obligates God to give to you and bless you. And if you don't do that, then God won't give to you.

So we want our pastor dressed to the nines. We want him driving the best car. And then he said to me, people in my church wouldn't look twice at you. And I just kind of stood there.

You know, here it comes. Now, this guy cared about me. He's a good, good man, a good brother. We were friends. And this man said to me, you know why my church wouldn't look twice at you and wouldn't come to you for advice or counsel or look at you as somebody that had anything of value to say to them?

You know why? And we're standing out in the yard, in my yard. And he goes, he look, he does this. And he looks to my driveway. You know what was sitting in my driveway?

You know what kind of car? A minivan. One minivan. For all our kids and car seats and all that stuff. He said, you're not driving a BMW or a Mercedes or Cadillac.

[45 : 40] You got nothing to offer and nothing to say. Because it's obvious God's not blessing you. And I thought, that's what the people of your church are being taught.

Wow. Wow. That's not what scripture teaches, is it? Jesus said that we're not measured by what we own and how much we have.

That's not a grip on life. But that's where this guy was coming from. In our depraved condition, in our spiritual and moral blindness, we follow the course of what is natural to us so that we live to use people and to use God.

And we even have teachings like that. Where people are taught that they can put God in a box and put him in a corner and make him do the right thing. Oh, doesn't that just break your heart?

That we feel like we have to make God do the right thing. Like we're all that. They don't know anything about this. You wonder, right?

[47 : 00] Because I certainly didn't make God do that. I didn't make him do the cross. God is no more than a kind of cosmic sugar daddy.

He exists to satisfy our greedy cravings for more. So it's this form, this form of greed that uses people as tools and as avenues through which we can make more money or increase our comfort and our control.

We don't want you to give at Grace Church simply because you want to see the pastor dressed to the nines or driving a Mercedes or whatever. That's not going to happen.

I don't, even if you gave me double what I'm making now. I just, I don't do Mercedes. It's, I want a truck. We give because we love the Lord.

That's it. We give because we love the Lord. Because it's his anyway. People manifest this true poisoned condition of their heart, this true form of greed at different levels in different ways.

[48 : 13] We know many believers, unbelievers, unbelievers in our lives. We know family, friends, coworkers. We consider generous people. They're generous people.

But don't be spiritually naive or deceived. Unbelievers do nothing from a motive to please God. Do you understand that? They can't. Unbelievers don't do anything from a motive to please God.

If they're an unbeliever, even if they say they're doing it for God, that is not true. The scripture tells us that. Look at verse 15 with me. Beware and be on your guard against every form of greed.

For not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions. Wow. Wow. I think I've got that up here, doesn't I?

Greed poisons your perspective toward life. It poisons your perspective toward family, toward God, toward friends, toward people in general.

[49 : 16] And it poisons your perspective toward life. So a lifestyle of pursuing material wealth feeds more greed. It feeds discontentment.

A greedy heart is set to seek more. And it fuels a greedy spirit. So this pursuit fosters an entitlement mentality. Folks, if you want a biblical answer for why so many Americans have this entitlement mentality and want the government to do everything for them and think that everybody owes them something.

I hear it. I interact with them. I talk with them. And I hear this constantly. If you want to know why that is, you need to look at the greed of the heart. That's why it's sin.

All of this opens the way for greed to grow and root itself in your heart. So a greedy heart consumes, it hoards, it demands more and more and more.

It's never content with what God provides. And in this heart attitude, life is not lived as a gift from the Lord. It's not lived grateful.

[50 : 27] It's not lived in humility. As a response to God's love and goodness. It's what it should be. It's about grabbing. It's about getting.

And it's about giving little or nothing to God. So it's the idol of more. And it robs you of enjoying relationship with the giver of all good things.

It robs you of receiving God's gifts with a grateful heart. So I'll say this is a way of a summary here for this point. Make no mistake and do not be deceived.

The idol of more is an issue of your heart's worship. Just as it is with any other sin in your life. This is all about the attitude of your heart in worship.

Then just give you a little more here. The poison perspective illustrated. This is the story that we read of this person that Jesus calls a fool.

[51 : 26] Who tore his barns down because he had a bumper crop. And he didn't recognize. Boy this is a gift from the Lord. This increase in this excess.

This abundance beyond what I need. And what I typically even use for my my livelihood. See he never thought about using any of that to benefit the community.

Or other people in his family. Or anything like that. It was all about him. I'm just going to build bigger barns and hoard it. That's the problem with greed.

So this man's true treasure was his stuff. It's not hard to see that. His heart was loyal to the God. Small g. Of his own making. His stuff.

He worshiped stuff for what he believed it could bring him. And what did he believe it could bring him? Life. Stuff is life. And that's not true. He was very wrong.

[52 : 26] And he was very deceived. While you're in Luke 12. Go back to Luke 8 with me. Luke 8. Excuse me.

And look at verse 14. This will give you some insight into what's going on in this man's heart. This is the parable of the soils.

And Jesus gets to this point in verse 14. Where he says. The seed which was sown and fell among the thorns. These are the ones who have heard.

That is heard the gospel. Heard the truth. And as they go on their way. What happens? They are choked with worries. Worries. And riches.

And pleasures. Of this life. And they bring no fruit to maturity. Worries and treasures and pleasures.

[53 : 24] In other words. Earthly mindedness. And it chokes out the truth. And it bears no fruit for life. That's the verse. Worries.

Riches. And pleasures. So what does this verse do? This verse helps anchor us. In an understanding. That is a biblical understanding. Of the true condition of this man's heart.

That Jesus calls a fool. And our hearts are informed and warned. By what we're taught. In these verses. But we don't build a theology on one verse.

So by turning to other places in scripture. Where this same theme is addressed. You and I can confidently conform. To what is a biblical perspective.

And theology of God. Of his ways. In our relationship to him. So let me take you to just a few more verses here. I can see I'm not going to get through all of it. But that's okay. I had in mind a part tour.

[54 : 24] And I'll save that for next time. I may give you a little glimpse. Just to entice you back. If that's what I got to do. Let's look at first Timothy. What are we doing as we turn to these last few verses?

I'm showing you that we're not trying to build a theology of stewardship on simply one verse. We're moving around in scripture to bring this out. It's first Timothy six.

Beginning in verse 17. As Paul closes this first letter. To his pastoral protege Timothy. He closes up with these words.

I think it's very instructive that this is what he wants to say to end his letter. Instruct those who are rich in this present world. Not to be conceited.

Or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches. But on God. Who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. That's a good turn of phrase isn't it?

[55 : 26] Don't trust riches. But trust God. Who richly supplies. I love that. Instruct these people to do good.

To be rich in good works. To be generous and ready to share. Do you see how that was a problem with the fool in Luke 12? Storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future.

So that they may take hold of that which is life and deeds. See the fool stored up. And he stored up for a different future. He stored up for an earthly future.

So don't think of that as investing. Don't think of that as wise investment. Because Jesus condemned it. So we know it's not that. This man had a greedy heart. This was all about hoarding. Jesus said no. Here we're being told by Paul. We're to store up for a heavenly future. That's called laying up treasure in heaven. All right.

[56 : 32] Let's look at chapter 3 verse 3 in 1 Timothy. This is very interesting because Paul is going through a list of qualifications.

Character qualifications for pastors. And he comes to this point in verse 3. A pastor is not to be addicted to wine or pugnacious. But gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. Ministers aren't in it for the money. And it can't change. That cannot change. A congregation should want to bless their pastor.

Absolutely. You can see that in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5. And even in this book in 1 Timothy 5. You can see principles for giving that relate to the congregation supporting the pastor.

Paul said that someone who teaches and preaches the word of God for a living should make their living by that. They should be supported in that. That's all fine and good. Those principles are here. [57 : 32] But pastors are to remain free from the love of money. That isn't to be the desire of our heart as we shepherd God's people. All right. Let me take you to the book of Proverbs. All the way back in the middle of the Bible to the book of Proverbs 23.

Again, these are just principles that are helping us see more of the truth of what it means to build a biblical theology of stewardship. That God owns all things and we've been entrusted with what we have to the glory of God.

And how are we to use that for his glory? Proverbs 23, 4 and 5. Do not weary yourself to gain wealth. Cease from your consideration of it.

When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens. That's a good principle, isn't it?

Do you know of people who are wearying themselves because they got to make that dollar? It's not about just supporting their family. They got to make that dollar because they got to go to Disney World every year.

[58 : 37] They got to support that thing out there and that thing out there and that thing over there and this back here. And it's like they're imprisoned. Remember, remember as I say that.

Money is not bad in and of itself. And God blesses us and we are to enjoy the gifts that God gives us to the fullest. But there's a way to do that and a way not to do that. There's a way for you to be robbed of that joy.

And greed is that way. And so is worry. I'm not going to have time to do more with that. I wanted to develop those two concepts for you. I'm going to have to end here in just a minute.

Let me give you a couple more verses before we close out. Ecclesiastes 5.10. So if you go to the end of Proverbs. And switch over to the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 5.

And look at verse 10. So here's Solomon. The wisest man to ever live beyond the Lord Jesus himself. He who loves money will not be satisfied with money.

[59 : 48] Nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity. Vanity is breath, vapor. A puff of smoke and it's gone.

Like a cloud going across the sky. This too is vanity. And then finally Hebrews. Toward the back of the Bible again.

Hebrews chapter 13. Verse 5. Make sure that your character is free from the love of money.

This is for all of us. Make sure that your character is free from the love of money. You see how this is a heart issue? Being content with what you have.

Being content with what you have. For he himself has said, I will never desert you. Nor will I ever forsake you. That's typically what drives this attitude of greed.

[60 : 54] And a desire for more. And a lack of contentment. Is we're worried. We're anxious people. We think we've got to go out and get, get, get. And then hoard, hoard, hoard.

Because something might happen. There's a difference between circumspection and prudence. And wisdom in this area of stewardship. And greed and hoard, hoarding.

And just a lust for more. And the Bible helps us discern that. Verse 21. Back in Luke. As I, as I move to a close here, folks.

Verse 21. Tells the truth of it for us. So is the man who stores up treasure for himself. And is not rich toward God.

We can be really greedy toward the Lord. The bottom line. This man's greed kept him from having an eternal perspective.

[61 : 54] A heavenly mindedness about relationships and about life. He lived more by the now of earth than by the nearness of heaven.

And we are called to live near to heaven in our hearts. In other words. This guy didn't see his abundance as a gift from God. To be used as a blessing to others.

