

1 **God is Good, All the Time ...**

*Dear friends, God is good. So I beg you to offer your bodies to him as a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing. That's the most sensible way to serve God. Romans 12:1 CEV*

2 **Today is Stewardship Celebration Sunday.**

- This month, we've been talking about using our lives and resources – using what we've got – to glorify God.
- Today, I'd like to share a sermon about using our resources to fulfill God's purposes for our lives. This outline comes from Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Church in Southern California, and author of the Purpose-Driven Life.
- It's so good, I wanted to share it with you.

3 ***Tell people to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give happily to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven—it is the only safe investment for eternity! And they will be living a fruitful Christian life down here as well" (1 Timothy 6:18-19).***

4 **These verses make it clear that money is to be used, not loved.**

- You are to use money, and you are to love people.
- If you get that reversed, you are in trouble because if you start loving money, you will start using people to get more money.
- Money has a tremendous potential for good if you use it as God intended. It is a tool that the Bible tells us to use for good in order to fulfill God's purposes for our lives. What are those purposes?

5 **Three of God's Purposes for Your Life**

6 **I am going to share with you a radical approach to giving. God has five purposes for your life on earth:**

- Today, I'd like to talk about the first three of them: worship, fellowship, and discipleship.
- We'll talk about the last two next week.

7 **This life is really just preparation for eternity. One day your heart is going to stop, and that will be the end of your body, but it certainly won't be the end of you.**

- You were created in God's image, which means that you were made to last forever. You are going to spend more time on the other side of eternity than on this side.
- On this side of eternity you get 60, 80, 90 at the most 100 years. Think about it - that really isn't very much time compared to the trillions and trillions and trillions of years you will spend in eternity.
- The question then becomes, what on earth am I here for?
- The Bible answers that question: This life is preparation for the next.
  - This is the practice time.
  - This is the dress rehearsal before the real act starts.
  - This is the warm-up lap around the track before the real race begins.

8 **Consider this: The purpose of life on earth is for you to learn and practice what you are going to do forever in eternity.**

- The Bible says you are going to do four things in eternity: worship God, fellowship with believers, become more like Christ, and serve God.

9 **First, God wants you to invest in his treasury fund.**

- Jesus said: "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" (Matthew 6:19-20a).

- In Job, the Bible tells us, "Give up your lust for money [...] Then the Almighty himself will be your treasure" (Job 22:24-26).
  - You store up treasure in heaven and invest in the treasury fund by using some of your money to express worship.
  - Worship means bringing pleasure to God, and when you give back to God a part of what he has given to you, it honors him.
  - It brings him pleasure and it puts your treasure in heaven.
- 10  **Proverbs 3:9 says, "Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of all your income."**
- 11  **Notice this: God doesn't want the leftovers, but the first part of all your income.**
- Obviously, God doesn't need your money.
  - If this is the case, why does the Bible tell you over and over to honor God with the first part of your income?
  - He wants you to give the first part of your income because doing so reveals the state of your heart.
- 12  **The rest of Matthew 6:20 says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."**
- 13  **Jesus said that wherever your treasure is, your heart is going to be there.**
- Would you like to get interested in, say, Microsoft?
  - I will tell you how to do it very quickly: buy Microsoft stock.
  - All of a sudden you will become very interested in articles about Microsoft.
  - Do you want to be interested in John Deere? Then buy some stock in Deere and Company.
    - The Bible says that wherever you put your treasure, your heart is going to go there.
    - This is why God says, I want the first part of your money because your heart will follow and come to me.
- 14  **Thus, where I put my money shows my values and my priorities.**
- I may say that God is number one in my life, but the way I spend my time and spend my money show what truly is my first priority.
  - Where I put my money shows where my treasure is and where my values are. If I put my money in my house, my treasure is in my house.
  - If I put my money in entertainment, my treasure is in entertainment.
  - The question is, where is your heart today? Without even knowing you, I can tell you exactly where your heart is by looking at where your treasure is.
- 15  **Giving a worship gift means investing in God's treasury fund.**
- Not everything you give is a worship gift, however. There are other types of giving, but worship giving has two characteristics.
    - Number one, worship giving is undesigned. In worship giving, you just bring your gift before God and say, "God, here it is. Use it any way you want."
    - That's why it's important to give your gift to God, and not to the budget of the church. That's why giving to the general fund is important. You're trusting it to God.
    - When you give it to God, you are trusting him to work through the church for his purposes. You are surrendering it to Him.
- 16  **Acts 4:34-35 says that "Christians laid their offerings at the apostles' feet."**
- 17  **You see, the heart of worship is surrender.**
- You surrender and say, "Do what you want with it, Lord."
  - In other words, you don't direct it, strategize about it, or plan it.
  - You just bring it to God and say, "God, I am bringing this to you as an act of worship."

- Designated giving is something we should do above and beyond our basic tithes and offerings. Tithes and offerings as an act of worship come first.
- 18  **The second characteristic of worship giving is that the gift is given when and where you worship.**
- 19  **The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 16:2, "On every Lord's Day, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering."**
- 20  **This verse teaches us a lot about giving.**
- First, it says to give every Sunday. Why is that?
  - You give the first part of your money on the first day of the week to remind yourself that you want God first in your life.
  - It is just a reminder. You give the first part of your money on the first day of the week and say, "God you are number one." It is an act of worship.
- 21  **Notice that Paul says to give every Sunday, meaning that worship giving is the weekly giving of what we have put aside from our earnings.**
- That means the worship gift is planned. It is not just spontaneous.
  - I used to think that the greatest kind of giving was spontaneous, like after suddenly being moved by a sermon or a video and finding myself pulling out my wallet and just giving everything I have.
  - That type of giving, spontaneous giving, is actually not the best kind of giving.
- 22  **God says he wants you to plan your worship giving because he commands us, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind" (Matthew 22:37).**
- 23  **Because God wants you to love him with your mind, not just your heart you should plan your worship giving.**
- This point is very important: God expects you to give to this fund before you give to any of the other funds.
  - He desires this because he wants your heart. He doesn't need your money.
- 24  **The Bible says in Deuteronomy 14:23, "The purpose of tithing is to teach you to always put God first in your lives."**
- 25  **In essence, God says, "I want not your money, but I want what it represents, your heart."**
- To summarize, this first kind of giving means giving your undesignated gift to the treasury fund, as an act of worship, when and where you worship.
- 26  **Second, God wants you to invest in his mutual fund.**
- 27  **The Bible tells us in Romans 12:10 to "love one another with brotherly affection and take delight in honoring each other."**
- 28  **Again, this is the second purpose of life: to live in love and fellowship with believers.**
- God says, I want you to learn to love me, but I also want you to learn to love other people in my family, for you are not merely one who believes; You are also one who belongs.
  - The moment you stepped across the line spiritually, you didn't just give your life to Christ; you became a part of his family.
- 29  **God created the entire universe just so that the human race could exist, and you were created as an object of his love to be in his family.**
- God is love and made you so that he could love you.

- In that love, just as earthly parents want their children to love each other, God wants his children to love each other.
  - That is why God commands us to love one another with mutual affection.
- 30  **Now, I can love fellow believers with my time, but how do I do it with my money?**
- I invest in God's mutual fund by using some of my money to encourage fellowship.
- 31  **Hebrews 10:24 says, "Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds."**
- 32  **You can think to yourself, "How can I encourage the people in my life?"**
- How can I encourage other believers in my church, in my prayer group, Bible Study, or mission group?"
  - The Bible says in Romans 12 to share what you have with God's people. You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. Giving is the essence of love.
- 33  **Giving to fellow believers produces the same result as giving to God.**
- It draws you closer to them.
  - If you want to draw closer to anybody, just give that person something.
  - There are so many way to invest in God's mutual fund, to give to fellow believers.
    - You can provide a meal for somebody, or to buy a card or gift to encourage somebody.
    - You can take somebody to lunch, or you pay for a babysitter so that a couple can go to a seminar.
    - You can give some cash to someone needy in your church, or you can open up your home to someone who needs a place to stay.
    - Any time you invest in other believers, you are investing in God's mutual fund.
- 34  **There are several reasons why we should use our money to encourage fellowship.**
- 35  **2 Corinthians 9:12,13 mentions a few: "So two good things will happen—the needs of the Christians will be met, and they will joyfully express their thanksgiving to God. You will be glorifying God through your generous gifts. For your generosity to them will prove that you are obedient to the Good News of Christ."**
- 36  **3 John 1:5, says, "Dear friend, when you extend hospitality to Christian brothers and sisters, even when they are strangers, you make the faith visible."**
- 37  **"How wonderful it is, how pleasant, when God's people live in harmony!" (Psalm 133:1).**
- 38  **Investing in God's mutual fund builds unity among believers.**
- 39  **Third, God wants you to invest in his growth fund.**
- God's third purpose for your life is for you to become like Christ.
  - Most people know how to use their time to grow spiritually but don't know how to use their money to grow.
  - The way to invest in the growth fund is by using some of your money to enhance your character and become more like Christ.
- 40  **Proverbs 10:16 tells us, "The earnings of the godly enhance their lives, but evil people squander their money on sin."**
- 41  **We all know that Satan has a zillion ways to get us to squander our money instead of investing for eternity.**
- You are not going to take your car to heaven or your clothes, your china or your condo.
  - However, you will take your character to heaven. For this reason, you should spend some

of your money on your character.

- 42  **Proverbs 23:23 says, "Buy the truth and do not sell it."**
- 43  **What does this mean?**
- Using your money to buy a Christian book, to order some teaching tapes, to take a class, to attend a conference, or to attend a retreat, will help you grow spiritually.
  - Doing these such things means you are investing in your spiritual growth fund.
  - I will never forget buying my first Bible as a teenager. It was the Living Bible. God's Word came alive and changed my life. Probably the best investment, I've ever made!
- 44  **Isaiah 55:2 says, "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!"**
- 45  **The author is saying that it is wiser spend your money on something that is going last.**
- Rather than hoarding your money, take some of it and use it to make yourself a better person.
  - Become wiser and more Christlike by investing in the growth fund.
  - In light of eternity, our character is far more important than fleeting earthly things.
- 46  **Think about this: If your treasure is on earth, then every day you are getting further and further away from it.**
- You are not staying on this planet.
  - If your treasure is in heaven and that is where you are investing, then every day you are getting closer and closer to it.
  - Do you want to be moving away from your treasure, or do you want to be moving toward it? It is up to you.
- 47  **The Bible says, "If you are untrustworthy about handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?" (Luke 16:11).**
- 48  **You can't afford not to invest in eternity.**
- Not doing so is foolish and shortsighted.
  - Also, "He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness" (2 Corinthians 9:10).
  - In your lives God will increase the things you do that have his approval. God says he will multiply whatever you give away.
- 49  **Ask yourself, in which of these funds do you need to increase your investments?**
- You may ask, when do I start on making these investments?
  - The biggest mistake people make is that they start investing too late. The Bible says that if you wait for the perfect conditions, you will never get anything done.
  - Start giving now.
  - The key to purpose-driven giving, is found in 2 Corinthians 8:5,
- 50  **"They gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will."**
- 51  **The other giving simply flowed out of the purposes of God working in their lives.**
- Purpose-driven giving starts with purpose-driven living,
  - and if you start living for God's purposes, you are going to start giving to God's purposes.
- 52  **As we close today, I invite you to make this your prayer. God, you have told us what to do. Just help us to do it now. I ask that you bless us financially, not for**

**own benefit, not to be wealth builders, but so that we can be kingdom builders. Help us do the best we can with what we have for Jesus Christ today so that we can begin to live in light of eternity and live on purpose instead of by pressure of possession, position, pleasure, power or popularity. May we live for you, serve you and give to you in Jesus name. Amen.**