

Series: Living Well with Wealth

Series Theme: John Wesley's principles on money: 1) Earn all you can., 2) Save all you can., and 3) Give all you can.

Sermon #3: "Give All You Can"

Book: *Earn. Save. Give. Wesley's Simple Rules for Money* by James A. Harnish

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:17-19 "17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Text: Proverbs 11:25 "Generous persons will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed."

Sermon Blurb: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." This proverb may not be a direct quote from the Bible, but it certainly expresses the biblical teaching on money. God wants the best for our lives, and God is trying to urge us to live in a way that unleashes the greatest joy. Our goal with our money is generosity! Contrary to what we hear every day, financial joy comes from doing good work, saving well, and then giving generously. This Sunday we'll see how this deep joy of giving can be yours, too!

Gathering Song

Welcome: Pastor David

Worship Set: Sanctify

Worship prayer: Andrew

Kids to Kid's Church

Mission Moment: SleepOut -Scott

Prayers: Scott

Stewardship Moment: Teresa Gruber

Offering: Max

Message: "Save All You Can" -Pastor David

PP#1: Living Well with Wealth

"Give All You Can"

"Generous persons will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed." - Proverbs 11:25

"Living Well with Wealth." Message three: "Give all you can." Proverbs 11:25 "Generous persons will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed."

PP#2: *Image of a person jumping up very excited surrounded by a party background.*

[Excited] We finally get to the party! This is the message we've been waiting for! This is the good stuff, the fun, the joy.

We've been talking about money. It's been two weeks of heavy teaching, trying to get our brains around the radically different way that God frames money in the Bible. But today we get to see why. We see the payoff. We get to experience the *purpose* of what the Bible teaches on money.

You see, God wants us to live lives of abundance, of blessing, of fruitfulness, of making a difference. We are about something that is much bigger than we are. We are called into Kingdom work. We partner up with God as He transforms our lives and the world around us.

Because of that, we willingly, eagerly, invite Jesus to be the Lord of our lives. We choose to live His way rather than ours. He's got a path for us that is better than we could ever imagine. We don't trust just what we can plan. We throw ourselves into God's adventure. And it's a blast!

PP#3: *Image of a gleeful person throwing money all around, or perhaps a happy Ebenezer Scrooge.*

Our money—how we handle it, how we use it, how we treat it—is, in our culture, an extension of who we are. And so, we make Jesus the Lord of our money. And that changes everything!

God's grand financial plan for His people is to develop generosity in us. God wants us to be freaky generous. Remember, we are made in His image. And God is crazy generous, in all things. And so we, God's people made in God's image, are living most fully when we are generous like that, too.

So, how can we live that kind of generous? The Bible talks a lot about how. After all, the Bible talks a lot about money. So that's why I am, too. Jesus talked most about God and love, right. His next favorite topics, *toping* the list is money and/or possessions.

PP#4: *Image of John Wesley with the 3 rules of money.*

We've been having John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, help us summarize the Bible's teaching on money. He boils it down into three handy little phrases, phrases, thankfully, that we can take with us wherever we go: 1. Earn all you can. 2. Save all you can. 3. Give all you can.

This is why today's the party! We've already talked about earning all we can and saving all we can. Today it's about the giving!

PP#5: *Happy person riding a bicycle: person labeled "give," wheels labeled "earn" and "save."*

God's intention is to grow us all into radical generosity: to become crazy givers. But being able to give all we can rides on the two bicycle wheels of earning all we can and saving all we can. One of the reasons why Christian households strive to earn more is so that we can feed our habit of giving more. We, in our core identity, are addicted to giving—including money! So, we push ourselves to earn all we can—ethically, and within our ability, and while being careful to maintain healthy life balance—so we have more ability to give more.

That's why we also save all we can. Not only does it keep us from getting obsessed with stuff, from becoming self-centered, and not only does it provides stability for our lives, it also piles up resources so that we have the ability to fund the needs God identifies in front of us. We have the

ability to provide assistance because we have maintained the self-discipline ahead of time, of earning and saving up, for such a time as this. When God places a need in front of us, we can say, “Yes! I got this! I’ve got this covered.”

PP#6: Proverbs 11:25 “Generous persons will prosper; those who refresh others *will themselves be refreshed.*”

And that, church, is so much fun! Here’s the secret of the party: Giving really isn’t about meeting the needs you fund. We get no bragging rights about what we give. Giving is about releasing that blessing that comes from giving, in our own lives! That person doesn’t need my money. After all, God will route money to that person without me. *It is I* who needs to give money to that person. It unleashes joyous generosity within me.

Proverbs puts it this way, in 11:25, “Generous persons will prosper; those who refresh others *will themselves be refreshed.*” That’s the secret of the party!

OK, let’s go into the Scriptures. 1 Timothy 6. Paul is talking to Timothy, the young pastor of the church in Ephesus. He’s telling Timothy to help the people understand how God works. He wants to release in them the blessing of generosity. What instructions can he give to help them to live well with their wealth? Well, for starters, urge them to steer clear of how money and possessions can steal their hearts. Then, urge them to develop generosity.

PP#7: 1 Timothy 6:17-19 (CEB)

“17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. 18 Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. 19 In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Verse 17, “Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.”

Rich people—that’s most of us, you know—must pay attention to our wealth. Not to focus on it and let it consume us, but to continually work to put our focus, our trust, our hope in the Lord of our money. How? By actively doing good, by being rich in acts of service, and giving and sharing. We work hard at becoming more and more generous.

PP#8: Living Well with Wealth: Give all you can!

1. Pushing generosity - adding zeros

Now, as some of you heard a couple of weeks ago, I have a personal temptation to get tight-fisted with finances. I watch every dollar that comes and goes through my hands. I want the security that sound financial management provides. On good days I want to manage our finances responsibly so that we are well provided for. On other days I’m selfish, and I take great pride in being able to control of my own destiny in a chaotic world. This can mean that I lean toward being very careful with our money. Or, as my wife so openly told you all, I can err on the side of being tight and cheap.

Knowing this about myself, I've had to make it a constant goal to grow in generosity. I have prayed to God for years now to make me more and more generous. I've had to push myself, and let my wife push me, to keep giving beyond what is practical, beyond what is reasonable, beyond what even is smart. I still have to push myself to up my giving. My usual discernment process is naming a figure I want to give that makes me sense to me. Then, I pray about it, pushing myself to ask God to make me generous. Then I try doubling the amount, or adding a zero. As my breath catches in my throat, I ask my wife what number she is discerning. Over the years, I have been amazed how my higher number, over and over and over again, is almost always, the exact number she calls out.

To this day I still notice every time I give. But I am happy to say that I give much more easily. The saying goes, have you noticed how \$100 look so small at the store but so big in the offering plate? Well, I'm making progress; \$100 no longer looks so big when I give.

PP#9: Living Well with Wealth: Give all you can!

1. Pushing generosity - adding zeros
2. Monotonous generosity

Again I'll be honest. After some years, I've grown excited about being able to add zeros at the end of my giving amounts. I constantly challenge myself to add a zero. And I have found that in order to do that, my giving needs to be boring. Let me explain.

When some need comes up, and I get all excited about it, like when Brother Jeff talked about feeding children in the Philippines, or giving to the youth sleeping out overnight for the homeless, or when Teen Challenge gives their testimonies, I want to give. My heart tugs on my wallet. But when I look at my wallet, when I have that desire to give, there is only just so much there. I give that, but that leaves me without extra zeros.

So, what I have found I need to do, is to plan my giving slowly and consistently over time. I plan my budget, and I give a portion on a regular basis. I then, in an ongoing way, live more simply, day in and day out, while some is being syphoned off for giving. I don't really get to see this giving. Much of it happens electronically, transferring every month. We do that with my church giving. We do that with my giving to the homeless shelter we support. We do that with the children we have agreed to support. It's kinda boring. I don't get that exciting rush of writing out that big, gratifying check every so often. Rather, my giving just perks along and keeps going. But then, when I look at my end of the year statements, I'm shocked at the amounts I've been able to give. That \$30 a month child sponsorship ends up being nearly \$400! My monthly support of our missionaries Parker and Megan Ask, that's another \$500. And that \$200 to the homeless shelter every month, ends up being \$2,400 for the year! Wow! If I were to write out the check when I get the ask letter, I would probably feel good about \$40, or \$50, or \$240. But by giving monotonously, \$40 becomes \$400, \$240 becomes \$2,400. If I give only from the heart in the moment, even if I give until it hurts, my numbers still stay too low. I spend my monthly money on new stuff, like clothes, eating out, car payments. What's left is not enough to give the way I want. So, I give monotonously, slowly, living on less day by day, but that allows me to give so much more. And that excites me...I get almost giddy as the end of the year approaches. I can't wait to see the totals!

PP#10: Living Well with Wealth: Give all you can!

1. Pushing generosity - adding zeros
2. Monotonous generosity
3. A little means a lot

But there is no magic in big gifts, you understand. I just need to be sure my giving is big enough to match my finances. The dollar amount doesn't have to be big to mean a lot. The Bible tells of Jesus' comment of the poor widow who gave all that she had at the temple. She was poor, and gave just a couple of dollars. It wasn't much, of course. No big gift there. But for her, she skipped a rare luxury of a fancy coffee, or once again ate bologna rather than ham. Yet Jesus said that kind of generosity had earned her the party we've been talking about.

But again, the same monotonous giving factor is at play. In God's hands, your couple of bucks, and my couple of bucks, can really add up.

Consider the big givers, OK? Last year in America, foundations gave a total of \$58.5 billion dollars to needs. Charitable bequests gave almost \$32 billion. Corporate giving...ready for this? The big boys: \$18.5 billion. Now, individuals giving directly—not the rich folks giving through foundations, right?—individuals gave \$265 billion. You and I, we do the big giving in America! And among individuals, the lowest income people give the best! Those earning \$100,000 or more give about 2% of their income. Those earning \$50,000 - \$100,000 give an average of 3% of their income. Those earning between \$25,000 - \$50,000 give 5%. Those earning less than \$25,000 give 12% of their income! It's the poor who are most generous! It's the widow's mite!

The dollar amount doesn't matter to God. It's the generosity of the heart, learned, trained, monotonous generosity.

PP#11: Living Well with Wealth: Give all you can!

1. Pushing generosity - adding zeros
2. Monotonous generosity
3. A little means a lot
4. Give to trustworthy places

One more practical point: where should you give God's money? Technically, your money is to fund God's ministry. That can mean anything from youth sleepouts to hurricane relief. But God chooses to work primarily through local churches. And it is my opinion that our tithe on income should be routed through local churches. There is a great distrust in religious establishments nowadays. But I can tell you more statistics...OK, I'll spare you. But the stats show that local churches are still by far the safest places to give your dollars to God's work. We might be tempted to gofundme all kinds of individual efforts. But local churches offer the accountability and stewardship that is so wise when giving. Yes there are stories of churches mismanaging money, or routing it to selfish things like a new organ or brass plaques. Even still, local churches far outpace nearly every other collection group for good management of monies in ways that would make God pleased. We join with others to do God's ministry, linking our time, our talents, and our monies, in local churches. Reese and I, for example, have decided to give our full 10% tithe to this church.

It's funny, I talk about our giving, but I never physical put money in the offering plate! You see, we give electronically, having the monies transferred. The ushers have given up on me. If you watch them, they don't even offer the offering plate to me any more! And that's OK! There are lots of us who don't carry cash or use checks. Notice the icon on the bulletin insert? That's for cell phone giving. There are so many ways to give, and they're all perfectly fine. Check out our church's website.

Now, because I'm pursuing generosity, I am pushing for me to give more than 10%. Our goal is to give a double tithe. We want to give 10% tithe to our local church. We also want to give an additional 10% to offerings. Now, we're not there yet. We're growing, trying to increase our giving

each year. And these givings beyond our tithe we tend to give in other ways. The homeless shelter, for example, the sleepout, Community Care. I really don't care how you choose to give God's money away, but I would recommend that you try giving at least a majority of it to your local church. God, much of the time, works through local churches, I have realized.

PP#12: Living Well with Wealth: Give all you can!

1. Pushing generosity - adding zeros
2. Monotonous generosity
3. A little means a lot
4. Give to trustworthy places
5. Experimental generosity

Teresa Gruber has been talking to us about planning our giving to this church for next year. As your pastor, I'm not making a plug for you to give or give more to this church. As your fellow average Christian who loves this church, we will increase our giving to this church. I think Reese and I have committed to increasing our giving by 4% next year. Please hear me, I'm not in any way bragging about our giving. I just feel that since I'm being really open and honest about my journey to generosity, I should be open about my giving, and you can help hold me accountable. Actually, I don't need you...I've got a wife who is always nagging about giving more.

Did you know that my wife continued to give the same amount to this church every month, even after she was laid off of work? For six months I nervously watched the money go out, without her income coming in. Then in the extra time she had on her hands, she gave lumps of sums from our savings, with zeros on the end of them, as she discerned God's leading. She trusted in God, while I uneasily worked on our spreadsheets. And all I can do is testify: God gave her a job that paid her the amount that she had tithed on ahead of time. Now I don't recommend that for others, but that's what God called us to, and God took care of it. God is good!

PP#13: Malachi 3:10 (CEB)

"Bring the whole tenth-part to the storage house so there might be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord of heavenly forces. "See whether I do not open all the windows of the heavens for you and empty out a blessing until there is enough."

So, here's a challenge. I know all the interpretations of the biblical view on tithing, and I am still convinced that God's people should strive to tithe. Give God's work on earth 10% of your disposable income. In Malachi 3:10, God challenges His people to test Him on this. Try it and see, says God, give the full tithe. So I challenge anyone here today who isn't tithing, to try a trial test. Test God for 90 days. That's an average trial period. Give a full 10% of your disposable income for the next three months...yes, even over the holidays!...giving it first in some way to God's work, and see if God doesn't make ends meet for you. If it doesn't work, simply stop. But if it does, then commit to keep going. Give it a try. Test God.

PP#14: *Image of eagles flying, subtitled*, Proverbs 11:25 "Generous persons will prosper; those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed."

Eugene Peterson, who wrote *The Message* paraphrase of the Bible, also wrote a book, *Run with the Horses*. In it he tells how he saw some young birds perched on a dead branch that stretched

out over a lake. "One adult swallow got alongside the chicks and started shoving them out toward the end of the branch—pushing, pushing, pushing. The end one fell off. Somewhere between the branch and the water below, the wings started working and the fledgling was off on his own. Then the second one. The third one, however, was not to be bullied. At the last possible moment, his grip on the branch loosened just enough so that he swung downward, then tightened again [hanging upside down.] The parent pecked at the desperately clinging talons until it was more painful for the chick to hang on than risk the insecurities of flying. The grip was released and the wings began pumping. The mature swallow knew what the chick did not—that it would fly—that there was no danger in making it do what it was designed to do." Peterson writes that birds have feet and can walk. They have talons and can hold on to branches. But it is not until they are flying that they are living at their best, gracefully and beautifully.

We are made to be generous. Giving is the air into which we were born. "It is the action that was designed into us before our birth. Some people try desperately to hold on to themselves, to live for self. They look so bedraggled and pathetic doing it, hanging on to the dead branch of selfishness and self-centeredness, afraid to risk themselves on the untried wings of giving. Yet many people don't think they can live generously because they have never tried."

We were created to live generously by giving generously. We were meant to soar.

Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.

Amen.

Closing Song

Benediction: Pastor David
Church Conference