

More, Part 2: Trust

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VIDEO: "MORE segment from Wall Street"

We all want more. The question is what do we want more of? Last week we talked about how our desire for more stuff results in bondage. We worry about our stuff. We worry we won't have enough stuff or we worry that we will lose our stuff. We are in bondage to worry. When our desire is for more of God, it results in freedom. We are free from worry, greed and a false sense of security in our stuff.

On our platform we have a "Wheel of Fortune." Our thanks to Nick Parker, Ashley Shelton and Laura James for their help in building the wheel. On the television show, "Wheel of Fortune," contestants spin the wheel. If they are lucky the wheel lands on a large dollar amount they collect for every correct letter they identify in the mystery word or phrase carefully guarded by Vanna White. If they are not lucky they land on "bankrupt" or "lose a turn." It is all a matter of chance—do you get fortune or misfortune?

Life is like that. We don't know on any given day if we will experience fortune or misfortune. On our wheel are words that represent fortune and misfortune. I need a volunteer to spin the wheel and see what we are going to get. There are attitudes on this wheel that lead to freedom and joy no matter whether we have fortune or misfortune. There are also attitudes that lead us to bondage whether we experience fortune or misfortune. The purpose of this series is to look at the Biblical principles that lead us to financial peace, freedom and joy.

The Apostle Paul points us toward the road to freedom through trusting in God. Where do we place our trust?

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.

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Inspired by God, Paul tells Timothy to "command" some things of those who are rich. Notice that these are not "suggestions"; these are "commands." They are not optional. When the scriptures "command" something it is a matter of life or death. To violate these commands leads to spiritual death. To follow the

commands leads to spiritual life and vitality. The commands are intended to protect us from harm and lead us to life.

The first two commands are things God tell us not to do. These are addressed to “those who are rich in this world.” No one ever calls themselves rich. Rich people are persons who have more than I do! By the world’s standards everyone in this room is rich. Everyone here is richer than 95 percent of the rest of the world. So these commands are for all of us.

The first command is “not to be arrogant.” The word arrogant means to feel superior and to be overconfident. Arrogant persons believe they can take care of themselves. They have ability, looks, personality and resources. They are self-sufficient. They don’t need anyone, including God. It is interesting that one of the definitions of arrogant is “overconfident.” Arrogant people are not realistic; they are over-confident in their own abilities to handle life. Sooner or later the wheel of misfortune deals them a blow and they discover they cannot handle misfortune only with their own resources. A devastating illness, the loss of a loved one, a marriage falling apart. When you think you can handle life without God and others, you are destined for a hard fall. God wants to spare you from the futility of trying to deal with life’s misfortunes alone.

The second command is not “to put our hope in wealth.” It is interesting that on our currency we find the words “In God we trust.” Really? Do we trust God or the money? We hope that if we can get enough money then we will never have to worry. But how much is enough? Like the guy in the Wall Street clip, we

find it is always more. We never have enough to feel secure if our hope is in money.

Why? Paul says: “because wealth is so uncertain.” That has never been more true than today. There is so much uncertainty about what is going to happen to the world economy in 2012. Some news reports say that we will come out of the recession toward the end of the year. Others say that the recession is going to get much worse this year before it gets better next year—but we will never see the same level of prosperity we had before 2008. And there is a lot of uncertainty about the fall elections. Our lives are filled with uncertainty when in money we trust.

God gives us those two negative commands to protect us from the fall of arrogance and the uncertainty of money. The remaining three commands are stated positively. When we follow these commands we experience joy, peace and freedom.

The first positive command: “Put your hope in God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” Put your hope in God. When we trust in God we can deal with all of life’s fortunes or misfortunes. God has promised to give us strength and to walk with us through the difficult times of life. We do not face them alone and in our own strength. Someone here today may feel overwhelmed with misfortune. Choose today to trust in God. Thank him for walking with you. Thank him for giving you strength. Trust his promise that he will work all things together for good in your life—even the misfortunes. You need a power greater than yourself to deal with life’s misfortunes. Choose today to trust in God.

I especially love the second part of this verse. “Put your hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.” God wants us to enjoy everything he provides. There are some who say that if you have a lot, you should never enjoy any of it. You should give it all away except what is necessary for you for the bare necessities to live on. How freeing it is to know that God wants us to enjoy what he gives us. We can take a wonderful vacation without guilt. We can enjoy having nice homes, clothes and cars. It is OK. The crucial question is where is our hope? Is it in the stuff or is it in God? If our hope is in God, we are free to enjoy the good things he has given us—guilt free.

Secondly, we are commanded to “do good, to be rich in good deeds.” We are not just to keep all of God’s blessings to ourselves for our own enjoyment. We are blessed not just to be blessed. We are blessed to be a blessing. The greater enjoyment comes not from the finer things of life. The greater enjoyment of life is spelled out in these commands. First of all - to be rich in good deeds. Use your time and resources to bless others. Be rich not in stuff, but in what you do for others.

Occasionally I help on Monday evenings when Shelby and Theresa Stevens serve food to homeless persons at St. Benedict’s mission downtown. They have been doing this since our Impossible Dreams emphasis over two and a half years ago—every Monday night. I asked Shelby how they kept doing this without getting tired of it or burning out. He replied, “This is one of the greatest blessings in my life—to come down here every week and be able to help these folks.” Good deeds result in rich blessings in our lives. Another group of folks in

our church started a burrito ministry taking food, water and scripture verses to homeless persons on the streets. They also have been doing this for over two years and still find it to be a source of joy. Good deeds result in rich blessings in our lives. When you bless others you are even more blessed in return.

Thirdly, God's word commands us "to be generous and willing to share." Generous people are joyful people. Selfish people are miserable—notice at the root of miserable is "miser". Jesus taught us: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." That is one of the great ironies of life. The more we give the more we are blessed. Jesus went on to promise:

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. Luke 6:38

Unfortunately those who proclaim what is known as the "prosperity gospel" interpret this promise too narrowly. They proclaim to their followers, "If you send in a little money to support our ministry, then God will give you back 10, 50 or 100 times more money than you send in."

I believe that God does bless us with financial provision when we give generously. When we follow all of God's principles for our finances, we will be debt free, we will experience contentment, and we will have resources to give more generously than we ever imagined. If you want to learn these principles and apply them to your life, I encourage you to sign up today for the Crown Bible studies listed on the insert in your bulletin. It will break a financial plan into small steps that will help you experience God's financial blessings in your life.

However, I do not believe that God only promises to bless us financially in return for our generosity. Someone said, "Any gospel that is true in America but

not in Africa is no gospel at all.” If the gospel does not work for starving people in Africa then it is not true. There are some in Africa who may give what little they have to God’s work, but it does not mean that God will give them a new house with running water the next week. We saw many persons in Africa give their offerings, not knowing if they would have anything to eat the next day. God may give them blessings other than financial ones. God promises LIFE prosperity to generous givers—such as gaining wisdom, joy, peace, friendships, and future eternal reward. God will bless you for great generosity, but it may not necessarily be financial blessings.

I have practiced tithing since I got my first job as a paperboy at the age of 12. My parents taught me to give the first 10 percent of my income to God’s work through the church. They also taught me to save 10 percent and then to enjoy the rest. There have been times when I had a financial crisis and God put it on someone’s heart to send me the exact amount of money needed to repair a car or fix an appliance. Many of you have experienced God’s financial provision in times when you did not see how you were going to make it. But God does not always bless us in those ways. Sometimes he gives us contentment and peace to do with less or do without. And he blesses us in some other way than financially.

When we are faithful over the little things God entrusts us with more. You have heard stories of outlandish demands that celebrities make when they make an appearance. One of the most notorious came from the rock band Van Halen. Each contract insisted that a “bowl of M&M’s be provided backstage, but with

every brown M&M removed.” If the band arrived and discovered one single brown M&M in the bowl they had the right to cancel the concert and receive full payment. Sounds ridiculous.

There was actually a good reason behind this demand. Lead singer, David Lee Roth explained: “Our band was the first to take huge productions into third level markets. We would pull up with nine 18-wheeler trucks, full of gear. We found in these third tier markets that many of the requirements for our equipment were not met. The girders couldn’t support the weight of the lighting and speakers, the flooring would sink in or the doors were too small to handle our equipment. As a little test, buried somewhere in the middle of our contract would be Article 126, the no brown M&M clause. When I would walk backstage and see a brown M&M in the bowl, I knew we had better line check every detail of the entire production. Without fail we discovered a serious problem. The mistakes could be life threatening. In Colorado, we discovered that the local promoters failed to read the weight requirements and we would have fallen through the floor.”

What seemed like an unreasonable demand was really an application of Jesus principle: “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches?” (Luke 16:10,11)

God is worthy of our trust. He will walk with us through every experience of our lives and give us power to get through. The more we trust him, the more

we are blessed with the true riches of joy, peace, freedom. The question is can God trust us? Have we been faithful over little? Have we been faithful to give our tithe to him first? Or do we just give him the leftovers.

There is a family in our church who at the beginning of each year estimates their income for the year. Then they write a check for 10 percent of their anticipated income and give it to our church in January. That is an act of trusting God. They give first and trust God to provide and take care of them. The majority of people wait until December and see how they finish up the year and then give if anything is left over. Tithing is not a matter of money; it is a matter of trust. Do you trust God to be with you and take care of you? And just as importantly, can God trust you to be faithful to give the blessings you have received?