



EVERYTHING IN ALL THE WORLD BELONGS TO GOD

As God's people, we recognize that even our very lives are His, and that therefore He has rightful claim to all of the abundant provision that we enjoy each day.

1 Chronicles 29:11 – "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for ALL that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours."

Job 41:11 - "Who has first given to me, that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is mine.

Psalm 24:1 - "The earth is the LORD'S and all that fills it, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers."

While by American law we are owners of our property—permitted to dispense with it as we please—our higher vocation has us serving as temporary managers of a portion of God's belongings. Have you ever thought about it that way? When we say "yes" to Jesus as King, we do not simply embrace His gracious forgiveness, we also embrace His reign over all things. All things. He doesn't merely assuage our guilty conscience; King Jesus awakens in us a hunger and a growing passion to see all that we are and all that we have as "unto Him." Paul says in Romans 11:35-36, "Who has given a gift to Him that he might be repaid? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen." Is it not a very humbling experience to concede that what is mine is not mine, but His? Would it not be a life-changing perspective from which to live and move and have your being? Life becomes less about what I want to get out of it for myself, and more about what God wants to get out of my life in His hands for His glory.

RESPONSE

Put into your own words where you are with the concept of ownership. Does God only have access to a portion of me or does He have access to ALL of me? What holds me back? Be honest, are there any fears at play here? Pray: what might it look like if I took the next step in this?

RESPONSE

Where am I with this concept of stewardship? What do

I have at my disposal because God has provided

STEWARDSHIP

EVERYTHING WE HAVE HAS BEEN ENTRUSTED TO US

As God's stewards, we wisely and faithfully invest a portion of His resources in His ministry and mission through Hope Church.

James 1:17 - "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights..."

1 Chronicles 29:14, 15 - "For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. O LORD our God, all this abundance... comes from your hand and is all your own."

2 Corinthians 9:11 – "You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which...will produce thanksgiving to God."

2 Corinthians 9:11 - "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace...in order that in everything God may be glorified."

As you grow in following Jesus, an internal tectonic shift occurs; you realize that everything is a gift. What you had always presumed to be something you earned (grades, awards, position, money, respect, etc.), becomes something you have been given. Pride fades. Humility rises. Entitlement fades. Gratitude rises. Additionally, rather than proceeding as selfish owners of our stuff. we begin to embrace the privilege of stewarding God's stuff. While some of that is for our provision and enjoyment, some has a target beyond us. Paul says in 1 Timothy 6:17-19, "...charge them (the rich) not to be proud, not to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share...so that they may take hold of that which is truly life." True life involves faithful oversight of what God has given. Your mailperson is given your mail, not for his or her own benefit, but for yours. So too, we are couriers of God's resources, entrusted so that we might be wisely invested in and through the local church. It is King Jesus' genius strategy for spreading His assets around the globe. Transforming mere consumers into faithful distributors for God's Kingdom purposes.

abundantly? How am I managing God's resources beyond myself? Pray: what portion of what You have given to me, do you intend to give through me?	

MEMBERSHIP

EACH OF US IS A PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER

As Jesus' disciples comprising Hope Church, we're each called to engage as we offer a unique, dynamic expression of the Body of Christ in our Mason Plus community.

Romans 12:4-5 – "For as in one body we have many members...so we...are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another."

1 Corinthians 12:18 – "God arranged the members in the body... as He chose...Now, you are the body of Christ and individually members of it."

Ephesians 4:11-12, 16 - "And He (God) gave (leaders) to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ... when each part is working properly, the body grows so that it builds itself up in love."

Whether it's soups, sports, or symphonies; the adage holds—the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. For example, as an organized joint, the human shoulder can lift eight times its own weight! Knowing this, God has uniquely organized the various parts of the Church to function effectively together. While salvation has a very real, personal component, God never intended it to be a mere private experience. God Himself-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has always been community. So, unsurprisingly, when He chose to replicate Himself on the earth, He chose a corporate organism. In fact, the word translated "church" means gathering or assembly. The very essence of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus involves playing a unique role in the collective health and vitality of a local church who lives on mission together and bears Kingdom fruit together for God's glory. There is no greater joy! We are designed to pool God's resources graciously entrusted to each of us so that God might accomplish more among us and through us than He could by ourselves. An exponential increase! When all of the constituent parts of a local expression of the Church are invested, the body grows in its love for one another and its impact on the world.

RESPONSE

Am I truly embracing my particular role in who Hope Church is becoming? What keeps me from going all in? Imagine the unstoppable force of a community committed to one another and a singular vision. Pray that this would take even deeper root at Hope Church.



ALL FINANCIAL MATTERS ARE SPIRITUAL MATTERS FIRST

Knowing the immeasurable worth of God and the potential enticement of earthly riches, we give willingly from the heart; internal devotion compels us, not external obligation.

Matthew 6:21, 24 - "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. No one can serve two masters...You cannot serve God and money."

2 Corinthians 8:5 - "...but they gave themselves first to the LORD and then by the will of God to us."

2 Corinthians 9:7-8 – "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all thing at all times, you may abound in every good work."

Let's face a sobering truth together—money is God's greatest rival for our hearts in this world. This is why Paul warns us in 1 Timothy 6:10 that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs." As the currency of earthly security and happiness, money promises us daily that the more of it we have, the more we really live. Our world is often divided between the so-called "haves" and the "have-nots." The flaw inherent in that distinction, however, is that it is only ever economically based. What it does not detail is that many who "have" do not really live, while many who "have not" do. How can that be? Well, contentment is hard to come by for those trapped in the pursuit of more. "More" is like a moving carrot held out in front of us. If only I had _____, then I would be satisfied. Once that blank is filled, however, another blank appears. It's crazy, isn't it? Frustrating. Exhausting. But it doesn't have to be. Our money can be surrendered to God in worship, giving Him thanks daily and inviting Him to direct our spending, saving, and Kingdom investing. That is real life.

RESPONSE

Have you ever considered your money as a potential threat to your spiritual life? It doesn't have to be. It can actually become great cause for spiritual growth. It all depends on what you are depending on for life. Pray that God would relieve you of money's lure and guide you in surrendering it all to Him.



Which of the two is my greater struggle: being content

with what I have or trusting God for what lies ahead?



GENEROUS INVESTMENT REQUIRES A STEP OF FAITH

In giving generously, we communicate to God, ourselves, and to our Hope family, that we are more than content with His present provision and more than confident in His future provision.

2 Corinthians 8:2 - "...for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part."

2 Corinthians 9:6 - "The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

Proverbs 3:5-6 – "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your path."

A Sunday school teacher finished up a lesson on giving by asking, "You know where little boys go if they don't put their money in the offering plate?" A witty boy blurted out, "Yes ma'am. They go to the movies!" And we laugh because we can relate. Truth is you can only do one of two things with money: spend or give. You may also save, but that is merely delayed spending. Consuming is so natural to us. Giving is natural to God. Being invested in others is His native reflex. So, when we choose to follow King Jesus, God's Spirit gets busy within us; He turns insatiable consumers into generous Kingdom investors like Himself. Since money cannot bear the weight of our longings, practicing the art of intentional generosity sets us free from the wearying pursuit of constant acquisition. And this takes an act of faith born of a heart that is learning to be content with what is and confident in what God will provide. We struggle with generous living when we view our money as the source of current happiness and future security. Giving it up seems foolhardy. If, however, God is the one leading us to mirror Him in giving generously, then following through is a tangible declaration that God is our greatest treasure and assurance.

They are both questions of faith. If contentment, what of value could I give up for the One I value most? If the future, what am I storing away for later that could be freed up for God's Kingdom purposes today?		

SACRIFICE

GENEROUS INVESTMENT IS OFTEN COSTLY

Giving lavishly is a reflection of King Jesus' self-offering on the Cross and our growing satisfaction in God. We willingly give up immediate delights in order to participate in fulfilling God's ultimate desires.

Luke 21:4 - "For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she (widow) out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

2 Corinthians 8:3 - "For they gave according to their means...and beyond their means, of their own accord."

2 Corinthians 8:9 - "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich."

Mother Theresa once said, "Give, but give until it hurts." While that may be hyperbole when it comes to finances, it does seem consistent with the self-offering of our King. He didn't give of Himself only to a point, He gave all the way. And as we are cultivating generous hearts, inviting His heart to become our own, we can anticipate that it will cost us something. In 2 Samuel 24:24 King David says, "I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." Worship is sacrifice. It always has been. Generous living isn't aimed at quenching your guilty conscience, nor at gaining favor with God as if you're placating the Divine, getting on His good side for more blessings. No, we give of ourselves out of the overflow of all that we have been given. There is a mysterious and wonderful deep-seated and growing sense of gratitude that wells up within a disciple of King Jesus. Your motivation shifts from 'have to' (I'm obligated) or 'need to' (God is now obligated) to 'get to.' Most endeavors worth taking, take a lot of sacrifice. But the sacrifice only feels like taking, if we're clinging tightly to our resources. If they've already been offered up to God, giving them away...is easy.

As I grow to hold my finances with open hands, should I be surprised when God asks for more than I originally imagined? I tend to part with old clothes that are out of style anyway. What if I were to part with brand new clothes? God is honored in all of my generous giving, but how might He be even more honored in giving that I find sacrificial?





Far from being an extraction that diminishes us, cheerfully investing God's resources is one of life's greatest joys. God gives us the privilege of participating in His work in His world.

1 Chronicles 29:9,17 - "Then the people rejoiced because they had given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord...! (King David) have seen your people...offering freely and joyously to you."

2 Corinthians 8:4 - "...begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints."

2 Corinthians 9:7 – "Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

1 Timothy 6:17-19 – "...charge them (the rich) not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share...so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

I love that last line—"take hold of that which is truly life." This is the surprising coup of being a growing disciple of Jesus. The more His life is formed within us and finds expression through us, the more we find life worth living. Yes, giving generously, lavishly, even sacrificially includes a 'losing' of some sort, but as disciples of Jesus it is all gain in the end. Welcome to the good life! Where giving away under God's direction and by the Spirit's impulse is a path to even greater joy. Oh, imagine the joys we have missed out on because we convinced ourselves that generous living would diminish our happiness? To the contrary. We can't out-give God. He delights in faithful stewards and increases their capacity to give as He increases their desire. This isn't a get rich quick scheme—give more to get more. But when our joy is in Jesus and He moves our hearts to give, His lasting delight in us far outweighs any fleeting pleasure we might have created for ourselves. The local church is God's primary strategy for reaching the nations across the street and around the world. And true life is the joyful privilege of joining our generous giving with the generous giving of others at Hope Church to accomplish God's purposes in Mason plus and around the world.

Do I long to see Hope become an equipping center for multiplying discipleship? To see the next generations encountering the Gospel and the Word of God in the context of deepening relationships? Pray: that God's delight in my generosity would become my joy.

So what's NEXT?

1 Corinthians 16:2 - "On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up..."

2 Corinthians 9:5 - "...arrange in advance for the gift you've promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not an exaction

- MAKE A PLAN. We tend to be faithful when we are intentional.
- **ASK** God to give you discernment and to lead you in the specifics.
- **COMMIT** to invest generously in Hope Church's **InsideOut** project.
- **REMAIN** open to how that commitment might grow.
- And **DELIGHT** in glorifying God and contributing to the lasting joy of all people.



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