

Managing My Finances, Faith and Relationships

"In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that they are found trustworthy."

I Corinthians 4:2

What are the two greatest sources of stress in most working people's lives? According to research done by a respected corporation, they are issues related to time and money. Too often we spend time buying things we really don't want with money we really don't have to impress people we really don't like! In this session we will examine three issues that are discussed more in the New Testament than any other subjects: money, faith and relationships.

Our Finances: My Finances Today Give Me Options

The Bible has more to say about money than almost any other subject. There are 500 verses on prayer and more than 2,000 on money and possessions. Jesus talked about money consistently, telling us it revealed where our heart really is. Sixteen out of thirty-eight of His parables deal with money and possessions. Let's begin our discussion by looking at three statements about our finances. Reflect and respond:

1. Money will not make you happy.

People earn more money now worldwide than ever before, but statistics reveal we are less happy now than even forty years ago. Most agree with the statement above, but we still don't act like it.

Discussion: Why are people less happy now?

2. Debt will make you unhappy.

King Solomon wrote: "The rich rule over the poor and the borrower becomes the lender's slave."

Discussion: How does debt contribute to your grief and unhappiness?

3. Having a financial margin gives you options.

The truth is that money is a test and a tool for us. It reveals our hearts, and it can give us choices to do more of what we want, if we possess it.

Discussion: How has money been a test for you? How has it been a tool in your hands?

Biblical Case Study: Job (Job 1, 19:25-27)

Job was a wealthy man. He controlled a vast amount of money and possessions, including 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, 500 female donkeys and a very large household. Job 1:3 describes him as the greatest man living in the East. He had it all.

However, his life was tested to see what role his wealth played in his happiness. He seemed to lose almost everything, including his livestock, his children, his home, and his land. How did he respond to this loss? Examine Job 1:20: *"Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head; and he fell to the ground and worshiped."*

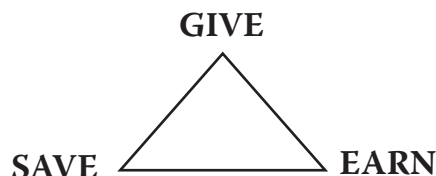
It's interesting. Job's response to the loss of nearly all his material wealth was to worship. Somehow, Job knew the only way he could maintain good perspective in that horrible situation was to worship God, declaring His Lordship over his life. He knew that worship welcomed Kingdom power into his circumstances. Job had a very different view of his circumstances than his friends did. He saw what God saw. What enabled him to do so?

1. He renewed his _____: He clung to the justice and character of God.
2. He let go of his _____: He was willing to let go of what he had lost.
3. He remembered his _____: He realized that he existed only to glorify God.

Making the Decision to Manage Finances Well

More than two hundred years ago, clergyman John Wesley lived by a financial principle that he summarized in three sentences. When he began his ministry he made 30 pounds. He lived on 28 pounds, and gave two to the church. Later, he made 60 pounds. He still lived on 28, and gave 32 to the church. Eventually, he made 120 pounds, and continued to live on 28 pounds. He was consistently giving 92 to the church. What was his little principle?

1. _____ ALL YOU CAN.
2. _____ ALL YOU CAN.
3. _____ ALL YOU CAN.



Biblical Counsel on Finances:

1. Put the _____ of things into perspective.
2. Recognize your _____ of life.
3. Reduce your _____.
4. Put your financial _____ in place and stick to it.
5. Don't _____ yourself to others.
6. Be _____ every day for God's provision.
7. _____ away as much as you can.

Discussion: Review John Wesley's philosophy on money: Earn all you can. Save all you can. Give all you can.

- How do you apply these three principles in your life?
- Where do you need to improve?

Our Faith: Today's Faith Gives Me Peace

It is easy for us as Christian leaders to assume we've "arrived" when it comes to our faith. Our spiritual journey is now often focused on helping others to grow. While this is, indeed, true—we cannot stop growing in our own spiritual walk. You've heard it before: you cannot lead anyone beyond where you have traveled yourself. If you stop growing today, you'll stop leading tomorrow. Our faith must continue to be stretched.

Discussion:

- Name one area of your spiritual journey that you believe you have grown in over the last three years. Why do you think you have grown in this area?
- Now, list one area where you believe you have declined; where you perhaps have fallen behind in your growth. Why do you think you have declined in this area?

Biblical Case Study: Jairus and the Woman with a Disease (Mark 5:21-43)

When we exercise our faith, it takes one of two forms: “trusting faith” or “claiming faith.” If we compared it to a sporting event, one type would be offense, the other, defense.

1. “_____” is like playing offense.

It is aggressive. It takes initiative and lays hold of what God has promised. It actively persists through prayer and obedience until it has the answer.

Example: The Woman with a Disease (5:25-34)

The woman with an issue of blood exercised “claiming faith.” She pursued Jesus and reached out to touch Him. Her touch was different than everyone else’s touch. She drew on God’s power and Jesus knew it. Her radical faith made her whole (v. 34).

Discussion: Can you name a recent time when you exercised “claiming faith?”

2. “_____” is like playing defense.

It is calm and quiet, built on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It rests in the knowledge of God’s character in difficult times.

Example: Jairus (5:21-24, 35-43)

Jairus was a synagogue official. His daughter was sick and close to death at home. When Jesus was interrupted on His way to see her, Jairus was not alarmed. Calmly, he rested on his relationship with Jesus. He trusted even when he didn’t understand.

Discussion: Can you name a recent time when you exercised “trusting faith?”

The Dynamics of Faith

Faith is everywhere around us. All of us exercise it everyday. For instance, you go to a doctor whose name you cannot pronounce. He gives you a prescription you cannot read. You take it to a pharmacist you have never seen. He gives you a medicine you do not understand...and yet you take it. Here are some truths about everyday faith:

1. Faith is _____ from God (Romans 12:3/Ephesians 2:8).

We already have it. The important choice is where we place it.

2. Faith is _____ through the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

As we consume God’s Word and exercise it, we build our faith muscle inside.

3. Faith is _____ through words and actions (Romans 10:9/Mark 11:23).

Faith and confession always go together. Faith and action always go together.

4. Faith is _____ in our day-to-day circumstances (James 1:2-3).

Life will throw you difficult days that will test and exercise your faith.

Discussion:

- Where is the greatest test of faith in your leadership today?
- How would God have you respond to that test?

Our Relationships: Today's Relationships Give Me Fulfillment

Each of us has important relationships in our lives, but it is amazing how little time we put into deciding who will be involved in our key relationships. Most of us just let them happen. We leave our relationships to chance, demonstrating the little value we really place on them. Two relationship experts write: *"Relationships help us to define who we are and what we become. Most of us can trace our successes to pivotal relationships."*

1. Life's greatest _____ involve other people.

2. You'll _____ life more if you like people.

3. You'll get further in life if people _____ you.

4. People are an organization's most _____ asset.

Your Relationship Network

Each of us has a relationship network. As we have already discussed, most leaders leave that network to chance. In the following diagram, you have the chance to write down the key people who make up your network. Be honest with yourself as you write in the names of those people who fit into your network. Note where your network is strong and where it is weak.

HEROES

People you admire and esteem.

ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS

People who help you keep commitments.

MENTORS

People who coach and guide you.

MODELS

People who do what you want to do.

INNER CIRCLE

Family and friends who share life.

MENTEES

People who you mentor and coach.

Biblical Case Study: Abigail vs. Nabal (I Samuel 25:1-42)

Abigail is a favorite Bible character for many. She was winsome and charismatic. She handled relationships skillfully. Her husband, Nabal, stood in contrast. His relational skills were his downfall. David would have killed Nabal and everyone in his home if it weren't for Abigail. Examine the contrast between the two in I Samuel 25.

Relationship Lessons from Abigail:

1. Risky Initiative – Abigail took the first step with David to resolve a sticky situation.
2. Emotional Security – Abigail demonstrated inward security in her identity.
3. Genuine Humility - Abigail submitted to David by falling at his feet.
4. Personal Responsibility – Abigail took responsibility to explain Nabal's conduct.
5. Selfless Attitude – Abigail focused completely on David's welfare and future success.

Discussion:

- What do you struggle with most when it comes to healthy relationships?

Assessment and Application**Assessment:**

On a scale of one to ten, (10 being very well) score yourself on how well you handle your money, faith and relationships. Why did you give yourself this score?

- Money:
- Faith:
- Relationships:

Application:

What is one step you could take to improve in each of these three areas?

- Money:
- Faith:
- Relationships: