



Randy Alcorn

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**GIVING**  
IS THE  
**GOOD**  
**LIFE**

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**MESSAGE SERIES**  
**OUTLINE**



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*Giving Is the Good Life Message Series Outline*

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

These message outlines, drawn from my book *Giving Is the Good Life: The Unexpected Path to Purpose and Joy*, focus on the life Jesus offers us and help us understand how we can experience it. God's people need to grasp that the abundant life—a life overflowing with vibrancy, satisfaction, and contentment—will never be found in money and possessions. Yet many of us end up following our culture's pattern of loving and pursuing material things. Sadly, living “the good life” (as our culture defines it) results in missing the best life.

What a tragedy! But it doesn't need to be that way. I believe pastors and leaders can give their churches a vision for the joy-filled, openhanded adventure of following Jesus, which brings us lasting pleasure and reaches far beyond this life to the next. You can help God's people understand that by serving Jesus and giving generously of our money and possessions, we're able to open our hands to receive the abundant life God has for us now.

These outlines were written by our staff at Eternal Perspective Ministries, so they use some of my personal examples and sometimes refer to me in the third person. (I wrote this introduction and the advisory notes and helped edit the outlines.) Of course, you should feel free to cite examples from your own experience and those you know, including people from your church.

Because I cite a lot of Scripture in *Giving Is the Good Life*, there are any number of alternative texts that could be used instead of or alongside those in the outlines. And naturally the messages could be given in a different order, and different parts could be emphasized. As a former pastor, I realize that you know how to put sermons together in a manner that fits your own style and the needs of your congregation. I encourage you to use these message outlines as a resource to enhance and supplement your own God-led preparation.

With the exception of the occasional longer story, many of the illustrations in *Giving Is the Good Life* have been abridged so they could be told briefly. The book contains many other stories that might be usable for you. Feel free to insert them as you wish or to replace illustrations from the book with your own. By all means, make these your own messages, but if anything here or in the book helps you, I'll be glad!

This outline is quite detailed. Depending on your teaching or preaching style, there is likely far more content in a message than you could use. This allows you to pick and choose. Just cut out the portions that don't resonate with you and include what does.

There are four suggested messages here, but this content could also be made into two messages or even three. Or you could easily expand it to make six, eight, or twelve messages. By all means, do whatever you think would be good for your church or class.

If you wish to use only one message, I would recommend the third one, “The Bad News and the Good News about Money,” based on 1 Timothy 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 6:17-19. Or consider a two-message series on 1 Timothy, the first focusing on the bad news about wealth in verses 9-10 and the second on the good news in verses 17-19.

Thank you for bringing God's Word to his people! My prayer is that through your faithful leadership and teaching, many more followers of Christ will understand the connection between generosity and the abundant life—for their present and eternal good, for the good of others, and for the glory of God.

**Randy Alcorn**

Author of *Giving Is the Good Life*

# MESSAGE 1: WHAT THE GOOD LIFE IS . . . AND ISN'T

*Primary texts to choose from: John 10:10; Luke 12:16-21; Mark 10:17-30*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION: IS THE GOOD LIFE WHAT WE THINK IT IS?

- a. Everybody wants the good life. After all, what's the alternative? A pointless or miserable life?
  - i. Everyone agrees that the good life includes happiness.
  - ii. We often suspect that spending our lives serving God and others might cost us our happiness.
  - iii. What if Jesus says otherwise in John 10:10? "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (NKJV).
  - iv. Jesus is life, and any discussion on the good life has to start with him:
    1. John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."
    2. John 5:21: "Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it."
    3. John 5:24: "Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life."
    4. John 6:57: "Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me."
- b. Seeking the good life in Christ is countercultural.
  - i. Our world screams, "Make lots of money and spend it on yourself. That's the good life."
  - ii. Debt is the new normal.
  - iii. Jesus, the source of life, wants more for us. He says, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving" (Acts 20:35, GNT).
  - iv. Therefore, God-centered generosity is essential to experiencing the true good life.
- c. Generosity pays off.
  - i. The best Christmas ever: Instead of asking for Christmas presents, a 10-year-old raises money to buy special bikes for mobility-impaired children ("Project Mobility Cycles for Life Riley Christensen 2010 Adaptive Cycle Giveaway," *YouTube* video, 1:46, posted by Project Mobility, December 16, 2011, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RbuhnHXoF8>; see also Gary Sledge, "5 Stories That Celebrate the Spirit of Giving," *Reader's Digest*, accessed January 27, 2019, <https://www.rd.com/true-stories/inspiring/5-stories-that-celebrate-the-spirit-of-giving/>).
  - ii. Generosity is good for everyone, not just Christians.
    1. *The Paradox of Generosity* by Smith and Davidson (p. 1) cites a study: "Those who give, receive back in turn. By spending ourselves for others' well-being, we enhance our own standing. . . . This is not only a philosophical or religious teaching; it is a sociological fact."

2. Example: A man receives a large bonus the same day his wife receives news that a missionary needs a new car. They give and realize the great joy of being chosen to join God's work ("Jack and Lisa Alexander - 2015 Celebration of Generosity," Vimeo video, 20:25, *Generous Giving*, April 25, 2015, <https://vimeo.com/126023293>).

## 2. HAVING MONEY IS NOT THE GOOD LIFE—WE JUST IMAGINE IT IS.

- a. Owen Wilson: He "has everything," yet attempts suicide (*People* magazine, September 10, 2007), and it's ironic that fans wish they had what he has.
- b. Numerous studies indicate that accumulating wealth doesn't bring the good life; still, countless people chase money and make choices as if it did.
- c. Jesus taught:

- i. "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

1. GNT: "Your true life is not made up of the things you own."
2. NLT: "Life is not measured by how much you own."
3. WE: "Even if a man has much more than he needs, it cannot give him life."

- ii. The parable of the rich fool in Luke 12:16-21 (NCV):

Then Jesus told this story: "There was a rich man who had some land, which grew a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What will I do? I have no place to keep all my crops.' Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and other goods. Then I can say to myself, "I have enough good things stored to last for many years. Rest, eat, drink, and enjoy life!"'

"But God said to him, 'Foolish man! Tonight your life will be taken from you. So who will get those things you have prepared for yourself?'

"This is how it will be for those who store up things for themselves and are not rich toward God."

1. So what made him a fool? He wasn't dishonest or unjust.
  2. Fool means "unthinking one"—someone who's out of touch with reality.
  3. He stored up treasures on earth, as if that's where he'd live forever.
  4. He ignored God's claims:
    - a. Psalm 24:1: "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."
    - b. Haggai 2:8: "'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty."
  5. He appeared to have foresight, planning 20 years ahead, when really he should have been planning 20 million years ahead. He didn't even have 20 hours ahead of him in his earthly life.
- iii. A wise person regularly asks, "Lord, what do you want me to do with all you have put in my hands?"
  - iv. D. L. Moody: "Our greatest fear should not be of failure, but of succeeding at something that doesn't really matter."

**3. MATERIALISTS ARE SELF-DESTRUCTIVE KEEPERS, WHILE CHRIST-FOLLOWERS ARE CALLED TO BE SELF-ENRICHING GIVERS.**

- a. The true good life doesn't say no to wealth or pleasure; it says yes to the greater and lasting wealth and pleasures found when we cheerfully part with God's money and possessions for others' good and God's glory.
- b. Money and possessions are not life giving—they are utterly incapable of imparting identity, purpose, significance, or security.

**4. LET'S NOT BUY OURSELVES TO DEATH.**

- a. Attempting to experience Jesus' version of the good life while burying ourselves in material abundance isn't just difficult; it's impossible.
- b. Many material things may be neutral or fun, but it's too easy to end up trusting our stuff instead of our Savior.
- c. Prosperity theology says that God's plan is always for us to be wealthy. Yet Jesus didn't have a place to lay his head, and he owned nothing but his robe and sandals: "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Matthew 8:20).
- d. Jesus scolded the church in Laodicea for sabotaging the true good life: "You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (Revelation 3:17).
- e. If abundant stuff equaled the abundant life, wealthy unbelievers wouldn't need Jesus.

**5. WHO ARE THE RICH?**

- a. Wealth is gauged by comparison, and we tend to compare ourselves with those wealthier than we are. Therefore, we think the wealthy are "them," not "us."
- b. In 2017 an American family of four with an annual income of \$24,600 was considered poor, yet this income level is in the top 2.09 percent of people worldwide.
- c. We may not feel rich, but when measured on a global scale, most of us fall in the top 1 percent of the world's wealthiest people.
- d. See [globalrichlist.com](http://globalrichlist.com).

**6. THE BIBLE CAN SEEM HARSH WHEN SPEAKING OF THE RICH. THERE'S A REASON FOR THAT.**

- a. Rich people are more likely to have a spirit of entitlement.
  - i. 1 Timothy 6:17: "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."
  - ii. Proverbs 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."
- b. It's difficult for the rich to feel their need for Jesus
  - i. The rich young ruler in Mark 10:21-27:

Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!"

The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God."

The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God."

- ii. In Jesus' day, wealth was seen as a sign of God's approval, and when Jesus replied to Peter's comment about leaving everything to follow him, he explained what real wealth is (Mark 10:29-30):

"Truly I tell you," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life."

**7. GOD GIVES US THESE WARNINGS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF LOVING MONEY BECAUSE HE LOVES US!**

- a. If a child you love is in danger of being hit by a car, do you lower your voice so you don't startle them, or do you shout to get their attention and keep them alive?
- b. A judge might condemn and punish the guilty, but a father warns and instructs.

**8. LET'S CULTIVATE A TASTE FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF ABUNDANCE.**

- a. Physician Renee Lockey was surprised by an idea she believes God planted in her heart: "Work like a doctor and live like a nurse."
  - i. Renee's colleagues assume she has denied herself by living below her means and giving away the rest, when in reality she has discovered the secret to the abundant life (Renee Lockey, "Work like a Doctor, Live like a Nurse," *WDW Blog*, March 1, 2018, <https://womendoingwell.org/work-like-a-doctor-live-like-a-nurse/>).
- b. Ignorant people are easy marks for the devil's schemes. One of his schemes is to tempt us to dethrone Jesus and make money our idol.
  - i. Paul warned his listeners about Satan's desire to "outwit us." But "we are not unaware of his schemes" (2 Corinthians 2:11).
  - ii. Sometimes people who are alert to the dangers of drugs, alcoholism, and porn don't think twice about compulsive acquisition, which can be just as damaging to our souls.
- c. Ask yourself, *What more do I need than what God has already given me?*
  - i. Ephesians 1:3 (BSB): "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms."



- ii. 2 Peter 1:3: "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness."
- d. The good life isn't always the "fun life" or the "easy life."
  - i. Sometimes we have to stand up for what's right even when it's not popular.
  - ii. Sometimes we may be maligned or persecuted.
  - iii. 1 Peter 4:13 (NLT): "Be very glad—for these trials make you partners with Christ in his suffering, so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing his glory when it is revealed to all the world."
  - iv. In Acts 16:22-34 (NLT), we see that Paul and Silas knew how to express joy despite suffering.

As a result, they shared the good life (and the Good News) with others:

A mob quickly formed against Paul and Silas, and the city officials ordered them stripped and beaten with wooden rods. They were severely beaten, and then they were thrown into prison. The jailer was ordered to make sure they didn't escape. So the jailer put them into the inner dungeon and clamped their feet in the stocks.

Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!"

The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household.

Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

## **9. CONCLUSION: WEALTH HAS MORTAL DANGERS, BUT ITS PROPER USE CAN BRING ETERNAL JOY.**

- a. Henry and Kimberley Kaestner turned down a lucrative contract with a business they found to be affiliated with the porn industry and almost lost their business as a result.
  - i. They chose what was right, and God blessed them with a turnaround and exponential growth (though he doesn't always do so).
  - ii. They now give a large percentage to Kingdom work.

## MESSAGE 1: *What the Good Life Is . . . and Isn't*

- iii. “There’s an incredible joy when you participate in the work of God. It’s remarkably fulfilling because it fills up the hole that would otherwise contain idols that take the place of God” (William F. High with Ashley B. McCauley, *The Generosity Bet: Secrets of Risk, Reward, and Real Joy* [Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image, 2014], 73–74).
- b. The abundance of the good life naturally overflows to others.\*
  - i. The Dead Sea can’t sustain life because, though water flows into it, there is no outlet.
  - ii. The Sea of Galilee supports life because the Jordan flows steadily through it.
  - iii. Generosity is contagious.
    - 1. Luke 6:38 (NLT): “Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”
    - 2. Pete and Debbie Ochs acquired a business constructing industrial products in prisons, employing inmates—many of whom had committed violent crimes.
      - a. They match the incredibly generous prisoner contributions dollar for dollar to charities, most of which exist to help the victims of crimes committed by inmates (“Pete and Deb Ochs: Jailhouse Generosity,” Vimeo video, 8:35, “Generous Giving,” <https://generousgiving.org/media/videos/pete-and-deb-ochs>).
      - b. Ephesians 4:28 (ESV): “Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need.” Note that it doesn’t say “so that he won’t steal any longer,” but “so that he may have something to share.”
- c. Alex and Edward Foster have chosen to cap their spending at a fraction of what they make.
  - i. One is a physician; one is an entrepreneur and former investment banker.
  - ii. Both have experienced some awkward moments as friends and family try to make sense of their choices.
  - iii. Edward says, “I don’t want to increase my [standard of] living as I earn more. I’m committed to increasing my standard of giving.”
  - iv. Alex says, “Being free of materialism makes you incredibly happy. There’s so much more joy in my life than when I was owned by the things I wanted” (Cameron Doolittle, “Three Lessons on Giving from the Foster Brothers,” *Generosity Path*, January 27, 2017, <http://www.generositypath.org/morestories/foster-brothers>).

\*Note: You could also use this point, or at least the illustration, at the beginning of the message/lesson.



MESSAGE 2:  
INVESTING IN THE GOOD LIFE

*Primary texts to choose from: Matthew 22:37-40; Matthew 25:34-40*

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**1. INTRODUCTION: GENEROSITY IS LOVE IN ACTION.**

- a. In many parts of India, patients rely on friends and family to care for them in the hospital.
  - i. One poor man had no one, and Christians gave of themselves and adopted him, cleaning and feeding him even though he commanded them not to speak to him of their faith.
  - ii. He could only resist their love in action for so long before he joined the Kingdom on his deathbed (“The Holy Man,” LIFE International, September 7, 2016, <https://www.lifeinternational.com/stories/the-holy-man/>).
- b. In Matthew 22:37-40 (CSB), when a religious leader asked Jesus which command was greatest, he responded, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and most important command. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets depend on these two commands.”
- c. Love is not something we display on a wall hanging; love is something we do.
  - i. 1 John 3:18: “Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.”
  - ii. John 14:23: “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching.”
  - iii. Matthew 25:34-40:

The King will say to those on his right, “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?”

The King will reply, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”
  - iv. It is impossible to truly love without giving.
    - 1. 1 John 3:16-17: “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?”
    - 2. Elie Wiesel: “The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference.”

- d. Making the investment of time and money to aid the physically and spiritually poor involves generously giving of ourselves and our resources.
  - i. Humble service to others breaks us out of our tiny orbits and puts us into orbit around God, who graciously meets the needs of those who meet the needs of the needy.
  - ii. But why go to the trouble when those in need can't give back? Proverbs 19:17 tells us that "whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will reward them for what they have done."
- e. What story do your financial records tell?
  - i. John Wesley didn't just preach the gospel; he lived it.
    - 1. When, after purchasing some pictures for his room, he noticed that his chambermaid had no winter coat, he asked himself, "Will thy Master say . . . 'Thou has adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold!'" (John Wesley, "On Dress," Sermon 88, Wesleyan-Holiness Digital Library, <https://whdl.org/dress-sermon-88>).
    - 2. Even though Wesley's income steadily rose, he continued to live on just a few pounds each year, believing that everything beyond our needs ought to be given to others' needs.
  - ii. To the selfish, the giver's behavior seems foolish and a poor investment.
    - 1. God thinks otherwise: "The world of the generous gets larger and larger; the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller" (Proverbs 11:24, MSG).
    - 2. A banker who read Randy Alcorn's books *The Treasure Principle* and *Why Pro-Life?* asked him where the best places were to give a million dollars to save unborn babies and help their mothers.
      - a. Randy says, "I didn't hear obligation in his voice. All I heard was excitement and joy."
      - b. Any investment that brings that kind of happiness and honors God is a good investment.

## 2. GIVING IS THE BEST INVESTMENT WE CAN MAKE.

- a. In 1893, a housekeeper named Mary invested all her meager inheritance to help fund a mission trip to Sudan (John Rinehart, "The Gospel Patron behind Sudan Interior Mission," Gospel Patrons, May 19, 2017, <https://www.gospelpatrons.org/articles/the-gospel-patron-behind-sudan-interior-mission>).
  - i. Two of the three missionaries died on that trip.
  - ii. Was Mary's investment wasted?
  - iii. Her gift ultimately touched over a hundred million people and counting.
- b. Author Francine Rivers devoted her first book written as a believer to Jesus (*Redeeming Love*).
  - i. More than one million copies of the book have sold.

## MESSAGE 2: *Investing in the Good Life*

- ii. Not only are the royalties helping untold numbers of people but the books themselves are used by ministries that help survivors of sex trafficking.
  - iii. “It was an act of obedience in the beginning but very quickly became a joyful offering” (Francine Rivers quote to Randy Alcorn).
- c. Our giving is a deposit into our eternal account.
- i. Paul commends the Philippians for their sacrificial support of his ministry.
    - 1. Philippians 4:19 (CSB): “My God will supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”
    - 2. This is a promise made specifically to givers who have stretched themselves to give to Kingdom ministry.
  - ii. The eternal beneficiaries of our giving are not only God and other people—we benefit too!
- d. Giving is a high-yield investment.
- i. Randy and Nanci Alcorn give all their book royalties to Kingdom work.
    - 1. They are often asked if they realize what they could have done with all the money from the sales of more than 11 million books.
    - 2. Their response? “Nothing that would bring us nearly as much joy.”
  - ii. When investors get excited about business deals, they call their friends and share the opportunity. How much more should we want to share this: in God’s new universe, our investments via giving will still be yielding dividends a billion years from now!
- e. Giving is pure gain.
- i. Jim Elliot: “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”
    - 1. Fools cling to things they can’t hold on to anyway.
    - 2. The wise investor gives away his life and time and money to gain something far better that will never be taken away.
  - ii. Matthew 13:44: “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”
    - 1. We don’t feel sorry for this man, because he happily sold everything he owned to gain everything he wanted.
    - 2. He joyfully parted with a large amount of money to obtain what was worth far more. That’s what happens when we give.
  - iii. Matthew 19:21: “Jesus answered, ‘If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’”
    - 1. The rich man went away sad because Jesus asked him to sacrifice his idol in order to follow him.
    - 2. Jesus offered him unlimited treasures in eternity in exchange, but money had too tight a grip on him.
    - 3. The young man missed out on the best investment opportunity available to anyone at any time in history.

**3. WHATEVER OUR VOCATION, WE ALL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO INVEST IN GOD'S KINGDOM.**

*[Note: This entire section could also be moved to the end of the message.]*

- a. Paul David Tripp: “Little kingdom living is an endless search for earthly treasure and unending focus on personal need; grace calls you to a bigger kingdom.”
- b. It’s easy to think that the William Tyndales and George Whitefields and John Newtons of the world are the people really doing the Kingdom work.
  - i. But each of these people had a wealthy patron whom God used to support the growing ministries and causes they championed.
  - ii. Humphrey Monmouth funded and strategized to smuggle Bibles into England with Tyndale.
  - iii. Lady Huntingdon used her aristocratic connections to help Whitefield reach the American colonies, spearheading the Great Awakening.
  - iv. John Thornton financed the first thousand-book printing of Newton’s hymns and helped raise up two generations of gospel preachers (John Rinehart, *Gospel Patrons: People Whose Generosity Changed the World* [Reclaimed Publishing, 2014]).
- c. God has given each of us a unique platform.
  - i. Leaving your job for “full-time ministry” may not be a step up for the Kingdom of God—God may have gifted you specifically to reach those in your own unique sphere of influence.
  - ii. God doesn’t just call his people to the far reaches of the earth for his Kingdom; he also calls people to serve right where they are.
  - iii. Do what God has called you to do with your whole heart, giving generously out of the overflow he has entrusted to you.
  - iv. Colossians 3:17: “Whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”
- d. Stanley Tam started U.S. Plastic Corporation in 1936 with \$37 and an idea.
  - i. God had a bigger idea: “Turn it over to me; I’ll make it succeed.”
  - ii. Tam made God majority owner, but God had an even bigger idea.
  - iii. God now owns 100 percent of the business, and the Tams gave away nearly half of their small salary as well.
  - iv. One of many beneficiaries of the Tams’ generosity was an organization that would have closed if Tam hadn’t invested \$50,000.
    1. That organization has been responsible for sharing the gospel with tens of thousands of people in 42 countries.
    2. More than 140,000 came to faith in Christ through this ministry in 2017 alone.
  - v. When Stanley retired, he opened a woodworking shop near U.S. Plastic Corp with a sign outside that said, “Are you seeking peace in your heart? The answer is in the Bible. Come inside for a free Bible.”

- vi. Stanley was simply sharing the peace and happiness God had given him.  
“People used to tell me, ‘Stanley, you’re giving it all away! Why aren’t you keeping it?’ I told them, ‘I am putting it in the bank account in Heaven.’” (Some of this is from a personal conversation between Randy Alcorn and Stanley Tam. His story can also be accessed on YouTube: “The Stanley Tam Story,” April 9, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QxPGFlxTSro>.)
- vii. Luke 19:17: “‘Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’”

**4. THE GOOD LIFE IS GIVING GENEROUSLY AND BEING CONTENT WITH WHAT YOU HAVE.**

- a. Charles Spurgeon: “You say, ‘If I had a little more, I should be very satisfied.’ You make a mistake. If you are not content with what you have, you would not be satisfied if it were doubled.”
- b. 1 Timothy 6:6 (NASB): “Godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.”
- c. It’s easy to assume that our purchases will automatically lead to greater contentment.
  - i. Dr. David G. Myers: “Compared with their grandparents, today’s young adults have grown up with much more affluence, slightly less happiness and much greater risk of depression and assorted social pathology” (Tori DeAngelis, “Consumerism and Its Discontents,” *Monitor on Psychology* 35, no. 6 [June 2004]: 52, <https://www.apa.org/monitor/jun04/discontents>).
  - ii. The false idea that prosperity brings contentment is nothing new: “To [the false teachers], a show of godliness is just a way to become wealthy. Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth” (1 Timothy 6:5-6, NLT).
  - iii. The true measure of our godliness is our contentment, not our bank-account balance.
    - 1. Contentment is being satisfied in whose you are, who you are, and what you have.
    - 2. Puritan Jeremiah Burroughs defines contentment as “that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which freely submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.”
    - 3. God’s many promises that he will never abandon or forsake us and that he is all-sufficient for our needs leave us with hearts at rest, content in his love.
  - iv. Money-love robs us of contentment.
    - 1. The false gods of money, possession, power, and fame will always break their promises and send us the bill.
    - 2. Proverbs 23:5: “Cast but a glance at riches, and they are gone, for they will surely sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle.”

- d. Contentment must be learned.
  - i. An airline pilot, while flying over the Tennessee mountains, said to his copilot, “See that little lake? When I was a kid, I used to sit in a rowboat down there, fishing. Every time a plane would fly overhead, I’d look up and wish I was flying it. Now I look down and wish I was in a rowboat, fishing” (Steven J. Cole, “Lesson 27: The Secret for Contentment [Philippians 4:10-13],” Bible.org, July 30, 2013, <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-27-secret-contentment-philippians-410-13>).
  - ii. Philippians 4:11-13: “I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”
  - iii. Paul’s words give us hope that contentment *can* be learned.
  - iv. Just like learning a new sport takes practice before it becomes natural, contentment can become second nature when we practice it often.
- e. Giving generously is better than a driveway full of Hummers.
  - i. Barnhart story: The son wants a Hummer, and Dad offers to buy an entire driveway full—or give to those who don’t know where their next meal will come from and have no access to the gospel.
  - ii. The son thinks this second option is a terrific idea (“Alan and Nathan Barnhart,” Vimeo video, 19:33, Generous Giving, <https://generousgiving.org/media/videos/alan-and-nathan-barnhart-2015-celebration-of-generosity>).
- f. Is God enough?
  - i. We often admire self-sufficiency in ourselves and others, but the key to contentment is to recognize that we are not enough.
  - ii. Our satisfaction in Jesus exists independently of large bank accounts and retirement funds.
  - iii. Job 1:21: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I will depart.”
  - iv. 1 Timothy 6:7 (PHILLIPS): “We brought absolutely nothing with us when we entered the world and we can be sure we shall take absolutely nothing with us when we leave it.”
  - v. The Israelite priests and Levites received no land: God was their portion (Numbers 18:20, *ESV*).
  - vi. C. S. Lewis: “He who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only” (C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*, New York: HarperCollins, 2001, 34).
- g. Less can be more.
  - i. Mark and Jennifer Higinbotham found their hearts were no longer in their successful medical equipment dealership, so they sold or gave away most of their holdings and served in Russia, Africa, homeless shelters, and their church.



## MESSAGE 2: *Investing in the Good Life*

- ii. They found the calling God prepared them for, and in the process, they found contentment. “None of those material possessions were inherently bad, we had no debt, and we used those things for ministry. But they were no longer important to us. We’ve never regretted or looked back for one moment, and we’re thrilled to be serving the Lord” (Mark and Jennifer Higinbotham, personal testimony, October 16, 2017).
  - iii. Professional ministry isn’t the key to contentment; the key is asking God what he wants you to do and then doing it.
- h. How much is enough?
- i. Always a little more (or a lot more) than we’ll ever have—unless we learn contentment.
  - ii. 1 Timothy 6:8: “If we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.”
    - 1. Paul’s words “we will be content” imply determined resolve.
    - 2. We can choose contentment despite circumstances because our eternal circumstances are secure.
  - iii. If we say we believe all of God’s Word, then why waste our lives chasing more stuff, which only robs us of contentment? Instead, let’s pursue more of God.

MESSAGE 3:  
**THE BAD NEWS AND THE GOOD NEWS  
ABOUT MONEY**

*Primary texts to choose from: 1 Timothy 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 6:17-19*

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**1. INTRODUCTION: IS MONEY A BLESSING OR A CURSE?**

- a. In 2016, Americans spent more than \$80 billion on lottery tickets.
  - i. This averages to \$300 per adult, more than what is spent on books, movies, music, sporting events, and video games combined.
  - ii. Half of the lottery tickets were purchased by the poorest third of the population.
  - iii. 70 percent of winners lose it all within a few years—many go bankrupt.
- b. Gaining lots of money doesn't fix the underlying heart issues related to greed and money-love.
  - i. The more we have, the more we qualify for bigger loans.
  - ii. Those who don't handle a small amount well won't suddenly become wise stewards of large amounts. (See page 119 of *Giving Is the Good Life* for several examples of lottery winners and what they lost as a result.)

**2. PAUL REVEALS THE PERILS OF CRAVING WEALTH.**

- a. Both Ephesians 5:5 and Colossians 3:5 condemn greed and sexual morality, so why are we shocked by sex scandals and not by our own greed?
  - i. Ephesians 5:5: "Of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."
  - ii. Colossians 3:5: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry."
- b. 1 Timothy 6:9-10: "Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."
  - i. Despite the fact that we may be tempted to think Paul's words to those in Ephesus don't apply to us, their culture and ours have many things in common.
    - 1. The Temple of Artemis functioned as a bank, financing much of the city's commerce.
    - 2. Ephesus was so wealthy it declined Alexander's offer to fund temple renovation.
    - 3. Material prosperity was their goal, and materialism the norm.
  - ii. Paul's focus wasn't on how much money we make but on what we treasure most.
  - iii. Paul was criticizing the underlying selfish desire to spend on ourselves or to keep riches rather than share them.
  - iv. Proverbs 30:8-9: "Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God."

- c. The wealth trap can destroy us.
  - i. Look again at this list of warnings in 1 Timothy 6:9-10:
    - 1. Falling into temptation
    - 2. Becoming ensnared in a trap
    - 3. Succumbing to many foolish desires
    - 4. Giving in to many harmful desires
    - 5. Plunging us into ruin
    - 6. Resulting in our destruction
    - 7. Leading us into all kinds of evil
    - 8. Causing us to wander from the faith
    - 9. Piercing ourselves with many griefs
  - ii. We have to ask ourselves:
    - 1. What are the payoffs of stepping in a bear trap?
    - 2. What is the profit in drowning?
    - 3. What is the upside of ruin?
    - 4. What are the benefits of destruction?
    - 5. Can you imagine packing more into two verses that would convey the utterly disastrous nature of giving in to the desire to get rich?
  - iii. God warns us that desiring to be rich will ultimately ruin us—and often our families as well.
    - 1. In *Strengthening Your Grip*, Chuck Swindoll writes, “Money can buy medicine, but not health. Money can buy a house, but not a home. Money can buy companionship, but not friends. Money can buy entertainment, but not happiness. Money can buy food, but not an appetite. Money can buy a bed, but not sleep. Money can buy a crucifix, but not a Savior. Money can buy the good life, but not eternal life” (Charles R. Swindoll, *Strengthening Your Grip: How to Be Grounded in a Chaotic World* [Brentwood, TN: Worthy Books, 2015], 88).
    - 2. Proverbs 15:16: “Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.”

### 3. MONEY IS NOT EVIL; PEOPLE ARE.

- a. 1 Timothy 6:10 doesn't say that money itself is evil.
  - i. Money can be used to purchase sex, bribe a judge, buy cocaine, and fund terrorism.
  - ii. Money can be used to finance housing, save children's lives, build wells, and fund Bible translations.
  - iii. John Wesley said, “In the hands of [God's] children, [money] is food for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, raiment for the naked. It gives to the traveler and the stranger where to lay his head. By it we may supply the place of a husband to the widow, and of a father to the fatherless. We may be a defense for the oppressed, a means of health to the sick, of ease to them that are in pain. It may be as eyes to the blind, as feet to the lame: yea, a lifter up from the gates of death!”

**4. SELWYN HUGHES: “REMEMBER THIS—YOU CAN’T SERVE GOD AND MONEY, BUT YOU CAN SERVE GOD WITH MONEY.”**

- a. Matthew 6:24: “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”
- b. Randy’s friend Tony Cimmarrusti: “Jesus changed my life thirty years ago when I finally surrendered to him on Wall Street. The Lord quickly showed me how dangerous materialism was. It’s like kudzu, that creeping vine that grows in the South. That’s what materialism is. And you ask people, How do you get rid of that vine? And they all give you the same answer: ‘You don’t! You just keep whacking away at it.’ That’s how materialism works. We have found that the only thing that breaks the hold of materialism on our lives is giving. Giving, giving, and giving. Giving wisely, giving smartly, giving spiritually, giving generously.”
- c. Money is a curse when it’s the center of our affection and a blessing when we use it wisely and generously to bless others.

**5. IN TALKING ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE WANDERED FROM THE FAITH, PAUL DESCRIBES THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN LURED AWAY FROM JESUS THROUGH THEIR LOVE OF MONEY. (THOSE FOLLOWING THE WRONG MAP SELDOM KNOW THEY’RE WANDERING.)**

- a. When Jesus spoke of “the deceitfulness of wealth” in Mark 4:19, he was saying that the evil one has switched the road signs so that those who think they’re heading toward the good life (whether through rebellion or gullibility) are actually wandering far from it.
- b. Paul may have been referring to those in Ephesus who years earlier had burned a set of expensive magic books when they first followed Christ, yet now needed to be reminded to forsake money-love.
- c. A man worked 70-hour weeks in order to buy the house of his dreams, supposedly for his wife and children, but he now lives there alone. He pursued the good life and ended up living a bad one.

**6. PEOPLE TEND TO RUN OUT OF MONEY BEFORE THEY RUN OUT OF MIRAGES, SO THEY CLING TO THE MYTH THAT THE THINGS THEY CAN’T AFFORD WILL SATISFY THEM.**

- a. Solomon’s money never ran out: “I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil” (Ecclesiastes 2:10).
- b. His conclusion: “Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun” (verse 11).
- c. See the chart on pages 132–133 of *Giving Is the Good Life* for commentary on Ecclesiastes 5.
  - i. Example: “Whoever loves money never has enough” application: The more we have, the more we want.
  - ii. Example: “Whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income” application: The more we have, the less we’re satisfied.

**7. HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS: "IF A PERSON GETS HIS ATTITUDE TOWARD MONEY STRAIGHT, IT WILL HELP STRAIGHTEN OUT ALMOST EVERY OTHER AREA IN HIS LIFE" (BILLY GRAHAM).**

- a. Let's run toward something better.
  - i. When a child is chased by a bully while his father is in sight, he isn't simply running from the bully; he is running to his dad.
  - ii. Likewise, we run from money-love toward God-love.
  - iii. 1 Timothy 6:11 moves from the warnings of money-love to an instruction to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness."
- b. The good life begins and ends with a happy God.
  - i. God is the source of all life: "In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus . . ." (1 Timothy 6:13).
  - ii. Paul is worshiping the happy God (the Greek word for blessed—*makarios*—is best translated "happy"), affirming God's control of the universe and his happy nature: "God will bring this about in his own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords" (1 Timothy 6:15, CSB).
  - iii. Any conversation about the good life is incomplete without an understanding that the eternally good life comes from our sovereign, immortal, and happy God.

**8. CONCLUSION: THE ANTIDOTE TO MATERIALISM**

- a. Though we're not required to give away everything, 1 Timothy 6:17-19 says, "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."
  - i. This passage neither dismisses nor condemns the rich but tells us where our focus should be: serving God's purposes, pursuing eternal rewards, and finding true fulfillment in this life.
  - ii. God's gifts surround us—some big, some small—and he wants us to enjoy all things that he has provided for our good.
  - iii. God isn't restrictive or begrudging; he is a good Father, full of joy, who wants to share that joy with us, giving us things expressly to delight us.
- b. The key to avoiding greed, pride, and possessiveness is recognizing God's ownership of everything.
  - i. Deuteronomy 10:14: "To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it."
  - ii. Leviticus 25:23: "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you reside in my land as foreigners and strangers."
  - iii. 1 Chronicles 29:11: "Yours, LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all."

- iv. Job 41:11: “Who has a claim against me that I must pay? Everything under heaven belongs to me.”
- v. Psalm 50:10-12: “Every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.”
- c. To those who think, *Well, at least I own myself*: “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
- d. Possibly the most biblically grounded four words of financial insight come from financial adviser Ron Blue, who, when asked how he’d sum up his life’s message in a single sentence, answered, “God owns it all.”
- e. By asking how God wants us to disperse the money he has entrusted to us, we honor him.
- f. So let’s regularly ask ourselves (and the Lord):
  - i. What will be the consequence of this purchase?
  - ii. What would be the result if I gave or saved that money instead?
- g. Imagining we’ve earned all that we have is a form of misplaced pride. Some of us talk about poorer people needing to pull themselves up by their bootstraps, yet many of them have grown up without having boots, while many of us grew up with multiple pairs of boots in our closets. We who were born on third base should not congratulate ourselves for hitting a triple.

***[Note from Randy: The following is an optional segment to consider putting here or earlier in this message, or in another message. This is an important qualifying point, yet care should be taken not to use it to negate the force of the call to part with one’s riches to the glory of God, as opposed to hoarding or spending most of them on ourselves and believing that’s what God wants us to do.]***

## **9. THE GOD OF RICHES RICHLY PROVIDES.**

- a. We don’t need the lottery.
- b. 1 Timothy 6:17: “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.”
  - i. Paul wasn’t telling us to stop enjoying life; he was saying, “Start enjoying the abundant life!”
  - ii. He wasn’t telling us not to care about treasures; he was saying, “Enjoy the superior treasures and joys of generosity.”
  - iii. God isn’t asking us to prize misery and live a life of stoic sacrifice; he’s inviting us to enjoy what we have in this world while we anticipate the treasures he promises us in the world to come.
- c. God is the ultimate good parent.
  - i. He provides for our needs and gives us surprising, delightful, frequent treats while not spoiling us with overindulgence or trouble-free ease.

- ii. Sometimes he allows us to be the provider of those special treats for others.
  - 1. Randy and Nanci visited the *Logos Hope* ship, where hundreds of young people live and work in spartan conditions while ministering to people at the ports they visit.
  - 2. When Randy, an avid snorkeler, heard that the *Logos Hope* workers were taking a sabbatical week, he jumped at the chance to use a portion of his book royalties to provide a day of snorkeling for the whole crew. Who do you think enjoyed that more? The missionaries or Randy and Nanci?
  - 3. Randy says, “I’ve had many snorkeling adventures in my life. In doing so, I’ve enjoyed the pure pleasure of worshiping the God who made the undersea wonders—from multicolored fish, sometimes in schools of thousands, to eels, crabs, turtles, monk seals, octopuses, dolphins, sharks, and rays. But a snorkeling trip that brought me perhaps the greatest joy is one I wasn’t there for.”
- iii. Our loving Father truly does richly provide for our enjoyment.

MESSAGE 4:  
**THE LIFE-GIVING ADVENTURE OF  
INVESTING IN ETERNITY**

*Primary texts to choose from: Matthew 6:19-21; Ephesians 2:10; 2 Corinthians 8–9 (possible emphasis on 9:11)*

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**1. INTRODUCTION: GIVING, AND THE JOY IT BRINGS, IS CONTAGIOUS.**

- a. A missions pastor returned from Sudan, sharing the plight of the Sudanese and the opportunities to make a difference.
  - i. Without any formal call for an offering, a spontaneous outbreak of joyous generosity brought in \$60,000.
  - ii. A group of fourth graders raised thousands through work projects.
  - iii. A sixth grader gave the \$50 she'd saved to play on a basketball team.
  - iv. One family donated the hundreds they'd saved for a Disneyland vacation. (See page 177 in *Giving Is the Good Life* for the full story.)
- b. Dave and Jessica Lindsey, along with their three children, began their giving adventure by helping to build a house for a family in Mexico.
  - i. The adventure continued when they served with a mission group for three months in Japan, sharing their one-bedroom/one-bathroom kitchenette apartment with three single staff members.
  - ii. The adventure grew when they decided to share the joy of generosity with the employees of their \$450 million company.
    - 1. They send hundreds of employees (all expenses paid) to help families in Mexico build homes each year.
    - 2. Their employees are also given days off to do volunteer work.
    - 3. They've designed the "Super Service Challenge," in which employees volunteer for a ministry and are asked what the nonprofit would do with a gift of \$5,000 or \$10,000. The chosen team wins that amount for their charity.
    - 4. Generous giving becomes the conscious norm rather than the occasional exception.
    - 5. Transformations happen in both the givers and the recipients. (See pages 167–168 in *Giving Is the Good Life* for the full story.)

**2. THE LINDSEYS AND ALL WHO GIVE ARE LIVING OUT PAUL'S COMMAND IN  
1 TIMOTHY 6:18 (BSB): "INSTRUCT [THE RICH] TO DO GOOD, TO BE RICH IN GOOD  
WORKS, AND TO BE GENEROUS AND READY TO SHARE."**

- a. Goodness is not some vague concept, and it cannot be separated from generosity. In fact, Greek scholars equate goodness with financial help such as giving and lending.
- b. A perfect example is found in Acts 2:45: "They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need."



- c. Our greatest happiness arises when we willingly give up what we would rather keep.
- d. God has made us to do good works.
  - i. Ephesians 2:10 (NLT): “We are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”
    - 1. Paul doesn’t say that God prepared doctrines for us to believe but works for us to do.
    - 2. These works are not random and insignificant; they have been prepared for us, and we are prepared for them.
  - ii. *Works* is not a dirty word.
    - 1. God condemns works as a way to earn salvation.
      - a. Isaiah 64:6: “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.”
      - b. Hebrews 9:14: “How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!”
    - 2. God commends works done for the right reasons.
      - a. James 2:17: “Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”
      - b. James 3:13: “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.”
- e. God provides in excess, not for us to live excessively, but so we can become rich in good works.
  - i. 2 Corinthians 8:14: “At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. The goal is equality.”
  - ii. 2 Corinthians 9:11: “You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.”
  - iii. He prospers you, not to raise your standard of living, but to raise your standard of giving.
    - 1. Tom and Bree Hsieh are multimillionaires who chose to live at the same level as their neighbors in one of the poorest areas in LA County so they could give away the rest.
      - a. Neighborhood boys asked the Hsiehs to teach them the Bible, and soon a growing group began coming each week.
      - b. They invited a troubled young girl to live with them, and her life was completely changed.
      - c. They shared their home with a family who had lost their apartment.
      - d. They now have the joy of treasured memories, treasured relationships, and treasures in Heaven.

- e. By giving away what they could have kept temporarily, they've gained the good life, which is both priceless and enduring (Lori Basheda, "Family Makes 200K a Year and Gives Most of It Away," *Orange County Register*, October 6, 2008, <https://www.ocregister.com/2008/10/06/family-makes-200k-a-year-and-gives-most-of-it-away/> and "Tom and Bree Hsieh - 2018 Spring Celebration of Generosity," Vimeo video, 9:05, *Generous Giving*, <https://generousgiving.org/media/videos/tom-and-bree-hsieh-2018-spring-celebration-of-generosity>).
2. John Wesley: "When a man becomes a Christian, he becomes industrious, trustworthy and prosperous. Now, if that man, when he gets all he can and saves all he can, does not give all he can, I have more hope for Judas Iscariot than for that man!"

### 3. GIVING IS ACTION, NOT THEORY.

- a. The command in 1 Timothy 6:18 to be generous corresponds to the idea of holding things loosely and unclenching our grip.
- b. 2 Corinthians 9:7: "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."
  - i. God loves a cheerful Bible student, but we don't postpone Bible study until we feel happy about doing it.
  - ii. Cheerfulness sometimes precedes giving, and other times cheerfulness follows.
- c. The command in 1 Timothy 6:18, sometimes translated "be willing to share," is better translated "be ready to share."
  - i. *Willing* is theory; *ready* is practice.
  - ii. Willing says, "If you ever need help, let me know." Ready says, "I want to help. May I mow your lawn Saturday?" or "May I bring dinner on Tuesday?"

### 4. DEBT CAN CHOKE OUR ABILITY TO GIVE.

- a. If we're not good stewards—living within our means, spending and saving wisely—we'll never be ready, no matter how willing we are to give.
  - i. How often are we unable to give because we've already spent God's abundance on ourselves?
    1. We are God's delivery drivers, made to take what he's given and pass it on to those who need it most.
    2. Imagine giving the FedEx driver a package and later finding out he took it home and kept it for himself.
  - ii. Waiting until you can "afford" to give—until you're out of debt—is postponing obedience and is unwise.
    1. When we give, God is pleased and will honor our efforts to pay off our debts.
    2. Malachi 3:10: "'Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.'"

3. Luke 6:38: "Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Isn't that kind of help exactly what people who want to get out of debt need?

**5. WHERE YOUR TREASURE GOES, YOUR HEART WILL FOLLOW.**

- a. Matthew 6:19-21: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
- b. When we give to those God brings across our path, our hearts become tied to people we might otherwise not even notice.
- c. Though sometimes our giving adventures are entirely unplanned, we are also free to schedule an adventure into our day. Randy gives us examples of what we can do:
  - i. Leave your credit card (briefly) with the cashier at a restaurant so the next person who comes in has the happy surprise of finding lunch paid for while you receive the joy of enjoying their smile.
  - ii. At the dollar store, give a harried mom a few extra dollars so her kids can buy something fun.

**6. WHEN WE GIVE, WE SEND OUR TREASURES AHEAD OF US INTO ETERNITY.**

- a. 1 Timothy 6:19: "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."
- b. Mark 10:21: "Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.'"
- c. Luke 12:33-34: "Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."
- d. Pharaohs were buried with their belongings, but though the pharaohs are long gone, until the grave robbers arrived, their treasures didn't move an inch.
- e. This is what Randy calls "the Treasure Principle": "You can't take it with you, but you can send it on ahead" (see his book by that title).
- f. Our treasures are:
  - i. Jesus
  - ii. Heaven
  - iii. Eternal rewards (positions of service we'll be granted, friends we'll enjoy because of what we've done with the money God entrusted to us on Earth, serving as a ruler under the King of kings)
  - iv. Pleasure (Psalm 16:11: "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.")

**7. WHEN WE RELOCATE OUR TREASURES, WE RELOCATE OUR HEARTS, SHIFTING OUR CENTER OF GRAVITY AWAY FROM OUR EARTHLY KINGDOM TO GOD AND HIS KINGDOM.**

- a. Our thoughts become increasingly fixed on Christ, the person we were made for, and on Heaven, the place we were made for.
- b. Giving isn't just a spiritual thermometer indicating our heart's condition; it's a thermostat with the power to change the condition of our hearts.
- c. Giving moves our hearts places they wouldn't otherwise go.
  - i. In one church, elderly, conservative women give time and money to help teen prostitutes and drug addicts, and end up becoming their friends and advocates.
  - ii. Randy read *Tortured for Christ* as a new believer and found a ministry to the persecuted church that he could give his summer job money to. In the 45 years since, he has found his heart aligned with suffering believers.

**8. WHAT WE TREASURE MOST WILL BE CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED IN WHAT WE FIX OUR EYES ON.**

**9. A. W. TOZER SUGGESTS WE ASK OURSELVES FOUR QUESTIONS TO UNCOVER OUR HEARTS' TREASURE:**

- a. What do we value most?
- b. What would we most hate to lose?
- c. What do our thoughts turn to most frequently when we are free to think about whatever we want to?
- d. What affords us the greatest pleasure? (A. W. Tozer, "The Transmutation of Wealth," in *Born after Midnight*, Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications, 1959, 106.)

**10. WHAT KIND OF LIFE WILL YOU GRAB HOLD OF AS YOU GIVE GENEROUSLY AND THEREBY STORE UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN?**

*[Note: This section may or may not fit here in one message; you might choose not to include it, or you might even devote a separate message to it.]*

- a. W. Ian Thomas: "Eternal life is not a peculiar feeling inside! It is not your ultimate destination, to which you will go when you are dead. If you are born again, eternal life is that quality of life that you possess right now."
- b. When will we take hold of abundant life? Not after we die, but after we give—in fact, after each time we give.
  - i. Treasures await us in Heaven, but attaining the authentic, abundant life happens here and now.
  - ii. Our investments that result in treasures in Heaven have an expressly stated purpose: so that we can take hold of the abundant life Jesus came to give us.
- c. We can only take hold of one kind of life at a time.

- i. To take hold of the life that's truly life, we must let go of
  - 1. Pride
  - 2. Self-deification
  - 3. Sex-obsession
  - 4. Money-love
- ii. We must say no to the "pathetic life":
  - 1. Craving Instagram and Facebook likes
  - 2. Viewing the world through the lens of a selfie
- iii. We must reject what the world calls the good life and embrace what God tells us is the true good life.
- iv. Knowing Jesus, the source of all life, is vital to taking hold of the true good life.

**11. DON'T WAIT TO EMBRACE AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE.**

- a. If you'd been alive during the Civil War and knew ahead of time that the North was going to win, how long would you have held on to your Confederate money?
- b. All our currency and possessions are essentially Confederate money, good only until this short life is over.
- c. How much valueless money will you be left with when you die or when Christ returns?
- d. Why not trade it in for eternal investments, which will continue compounding forever?
- e. Why not spend the rest of your life closing the gap between what you are giving and what you will one day wish you'd given?

**12. YOU MIGHT WONDER, IF I GIVE GENEROUSLY, WHERE WILL THE MONEY COME FROM TO REPLACE WHAT I'VE GIVEN?**

- a. Jesus commands us not to worry.
  - i. Matthew 6:25: "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?"
  - ii. Matthew 6:31: "Do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'"
  - iii. Matthew 6:34: "Do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."
  - iv. We have deceived ourselves about what we truly need. For example, a wealthy widow said this of her Bible study in a retirement community: "Whenever we discuss whether we should give more, we get into the 'bag lady syndrome'—talking as if unless we have millions of dollars stashed away, we're going to end up out on the streets."
- b. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus promises to take care of us: "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."
  - i. When we give away our earthly treasures, we are seeking God's Kingdom first.

- ii. Example: Randy's friend Cathy had a monthly grocery budget of only \$300 but was nevertheless prompted by the Holy Spirit to use it to buy several bags of groceries for a family in a tight spot.
  - 1. The store she'd shopped at drew her receipt for a giveaway in the amount of her \$300 purchase!
  - 2. Cathy says, "As far as I know, my friend never knew who provided the groceries, but God sure did."
- c. Generous giving isn't a cause for insecurity; it's the cure.

**13. DON'T POSTPONE YOUR GIVING.**

- a. Delayed giving is delayed obedience, which is really disobedience.
- b. Disposing of your estate after you die requires no faith—you have no choice but to leave your belongings to someone.
- c. Leaving wealth to our kids can be a hindrance to their maturity and create potential for strife and destruction of relationships.

**14. BECAUSE GOD IS THE GREATEST GIVER IN THE UNIVERSE, HE WON'T LET YOU OUTGIVE HIM. I DARE YOU TO TRY!**

**15. THIS ADVENTURE OF TRUSTING GOD AND SEEING HIM WORK IN AND THROUGH AND AROUND US IS THE ABUNDANT LIFE OF EXCITEMENT AND HAPPINESS, TO BE FOLLOWED BY THE UNENDING PLEASURES OF ETERNAL LIFE WITH GOD AND HIS PEOPLE IN A RENEWED AND VASTLY IMPROVED UNIVERSE.**

**16. CONCLUSION: WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT GIVING AND THE GOOD LIFE?**

- a. We've seen that once our basic needs are met and some reasonable wants are fulfilled, money stops helping us and starts hurting us.
- b. We've seen that wealth easily becomes an idol and that Jesus tells us we can't serve both him and money.
- c. The good news is that Jesus sets us free from money-love to serve God with money.
  - i. Eternal and abundant life begins in this world when we come to Jesus, the ultimate giver, and continues as we become more like him.
  - ii. The gospel itself centers on the single greatest act of giving in the history of the universe.
- d. Giving is putting into God's hands what belongs to him anyway.
  - i. It's the best possible investment with the highest possible return.
  - ii. We give to honor Jesus and to benefit others, and in the process, we benefit ourselves and our families—both now and forever!

- e. What's next?
  - i. Don't be tempted to think, *Sure, someday when I make a lot more money, then I'll start giving.*
    - 1. That's a lie from Satan, the father of lies.
    - 2. Will you believe that lie, or will you believe Jesus and take hold of life?
  - ii. You may need to make some lifestyle changes to loosen your grip on stuff and free up money to give.
    - 1. Skip some lattes or meals out.
    - 2. Sell valuable nonessentials.
    - 3. Downsize your home or keep driving an older car.
  - iii. Once you experience the good, abundant, generous life, life will never be the same—nor will you want it to be.
  - iv. When it comes to giving, just start doing it, and never stop. Then watch how God transforms you and those to whom you give.
  - v. Ask God to help you, by the power of his Holy Spirit, to take hold of the life that's truly life. That's a prayer he delights to answer!