

God's Investment Strategy

MESSAGES FOR THE NEW YEAR

So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with *true* riches?
– LUKE 16:11

The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives.

– DEUTERONOMY 14:23,
LIVING BIBLE

Command those who are rich in the things of this life not to be proud, but to place their hope, not in such an uncertain thing as riches, but in God, who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share with others. In this way they will store up for themselves a treasure which will be a solid foundation for the future. And then they will be able to win the life which is true life.

– 1 TIMOTHY 6:17-19,
GOOD NEWS

The beginning of the year is a good time to consider whether or not we are honoring God with our giving, and make whatever changes are needed. According to Deuteronomy 14:23, tithing is a way of putting God first. It's a continual reminder of God's lordship over our lives.

God's word has a lot to say about money. One out of six verses in the gospels has something to say about money. In fact, half of Jesus' parables are about stewardship. The question is, why? More than likely it's because God knows the tremendous influence and power that money has over our lives. We spend so much time working for it, that God needs to tell us how to use it wisely—for eternity.

WELCOME

Who is one of the shrewdest individuals you've ever known? Explain. [You may choose to use this ice-breaker as way of leading into the word segment.]

WORSHIP

Use Romans 12:1 as a springboard for your worship together: "We Are An Offering" (668), "Lord, Take Control" (790), "Freely, Freely" (635), "We Bow Down" (577).

WORD

Read Luke 16:1-15

1. In what crisis does the manager find himself? What plan does he devise?
2. In spite of the manager's deceit, what actions are commended by the owner (vs 8)? How does Jesus apply this parable to his disciples (vs 9)? [Basically Jesus says, "In light of everything that's going to happen in eternity, you ought to be wise and deliberate about the way in which you live." In the immediate context, Kingdom living involves the wise way in which you use your money.]
3. How can we use worldly wealth for eternal purposes (cf. 1 Timothy 6:17-19)?
4. What other principles do you find in this passage regarding the way in which we are to manage our money (vss 10-12)? [For example: God is the owner; I'm only the manager (vss 10-11). Faithfulness in the little things determines whether I can be trusted with larger matters (vs 12). The way I handle money directly affects me spiritually, and God's blessing in my life (vs 13).]
5. What kind of grade would you give yourself for the way you've managed your financial resources? What would you need to do in order to get a better grade?

WORKS

God does not want our money—He wants what it represents. Devote some time this week to asking yourself some tough questions:

- Does God *really* have first place in my life? Do my finances reflect it?
- Have I proven worthy of what God has already entrusted to me?
- Am I demonstrating that God could entrust me with more?
- In what ways am I making eternal investments with what God has given me?