

## INTRODUCTION

This is the last message in the Treasure Truth series. Today we're going to talk about "You Can't OUTGIVE God!" One of my friends and mentors is Jim Henry, who was pastor of First Baptist Orlando for many years. He tells the story about being on a Delta Airlines flight years ago. They developed some engine trouble and were diverted to the nearest airport to make an emergency landing. Everybody on the plane was pretty scared. As they were about to land, someone recognized him. They said, "Aren't you Pastor Jim Henry?" He said, "Yes, I am." And the passenger said, "Well, would you do something religious for us right now?" So Jim said that he took up an offering. Of course this is a funny story, but we sometimes forget that giving an offering to the Lord is an act of worship.

GABC has over 16,000 members but over half of them never attend and never give a penny. We're not unusual, that's true for most churches. I heard about one church where pastor mentioned this fact to one of his businessmen. This businessman owned his own business and was a hard-charging, two-fisted businessman. He was shocked to hear this statistic and he said, "Pastor, give me some of your letterhead. Let me write a letter to the members and sign your name to it. I'll bet I can do something about these sorry people who never come or give." The Pastor reluctantly gave the businessman permission, and he never knew what he wrote in the letter bearing his signature.

The following week the pastor got a letter from an inactive church member that said: Dear Pastor, I received your letter and I realize that I have not been as active as I should have been. I am enclosing a check for \$1,000 and I assure you that I will be in church this Sunday. Signed (name) P.S. Please tell your secretary that there is only one "t" in the word "dirty" and there is no "c" in "skunk."

But God doesn't want you to feel pressured to give. God wants you give with a cheerful heart!

Let's review our five keys to unlock God's Treasure Truth before we read our scripture:

1. God owns everything; He allows me to manage some of His wealth.
2. I can't take treasure with me to heaven; but I can send it on ahead.
3. My heart abides where I invest God's money.
4. I honor God when I give back to Him the first and the best.
5. The antidote for materialism is the joyful cycle of giving to receive to give even more.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and told them that giving an offering to God is like a farmer planting seeds.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15. "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. As it is written: 'He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever.' Now he

who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!"

There is an epidemic that is sweeping America and it isn't an outbreak of measles. There's a dangerous epidemic of the disease of materialism. Even followers of Jesus get caught up in the trap to get more and more and even more. Laurence Shames isn't a Christian writer; he's a secular journalist. Here's what he wrote in his book *The Hunger for More: Searching for Values in an Age of Greed*: "More. If there's a single word that summarizes American hopes and obsessions that's it—More! More money, more success, more luxuries, more gizmos. We live for more. For our next raise, our next house. And the things we already have, however wonderful they are, pale in comparison to the things we might still get. The hunger for more characterized the American frontier from its beginnings, but in the 1990's that appetite became a shared addiction. Lifestyle, defined as the sum total of the things one bought, seemed to take precedence over life itself."

According to *Time Magazine*, for every \$1,000 Americans make, we are spending \$1,300. Consumer debt stands at \$11.7 trillion; the average unpaid credit card debt is \$7,200. We're spending money we don't have to buy stuff we don't need to impress people we don't like. Just remember, if your outgo exceeds your income, then your upkeep will be your downfall.

That's why I recommend the 10-10-80 financial plan. You honor God with the first 10% of your income, then save 10%, and tighten your belt to live on 80% of your income. If you follow this plan you will live long and prosper.

We're all familiar with the U.S. economy, and the global economy. In this message I want to introduce you to God's economy. There are three pillars to God's economy.

### **1. GOD'S SUPPLY: He is the source of every blessing in my life!**

The Bible says, "Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness." (2 Corinthians 9:10) God supplies the seed. He supplies all the wealth and resources we have.

One Treasure Truth we've been repeating in this series is that God owns everything—we don't own anything. Someone sent me a Dilbert comic strip. His boss says, "It takes money to make money." Dilbert asked, "Then...where did the first money come from?" The boss thinks for a minute and says, "God?" Dilbert says, "Don't let Him hear doubt in your voice."

There's no doubt that God owns everything.

There are many places in the Bible where we're told that God supplies every good thing in our lives. The Bible says, "There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." (1 Corinthians 8:6) Everything comes from God and it is only through Jesus that we are alive. The Bible says in Him we live, and move, and have our being. Every beat of your heart is a gift from God. Every breath you take is a gift from God. Every command from your brain for your eye to move is a gift from God. It takes thousands of neural impulses and dozens of muscles for you to walk, and every one of them is a gift from God. He supplies everything good in our lives.

This passage talks about God supplying seed and also increasing the store of seed to enlarge the harvest, not a harvest of seeds, but a harvest of righteousness. Have you ever thought about the miraculous power of a seed to increase and enlarge? Consider a tiny watermelon seed you pick out when you're eating that delicious fruit. One seed weighs about 1/6 of a gram. But that seed can be planted and it will suck so much moisture and nutrients out of the ground that it can grow into a huge watermelon. Some watermelons can grow to be 100 pounds. That's about 300,000 times the weight of the seed. And in that watermelon you will find about 300 seeds, that if each of them were planted and grew big melons, that first seed would have multiplied its weight by 122 million times! That's the power of a seed.

A wise farmer doesn't store his seed, or eat his seed. He gives it away. It surrenders it to the ground. But is in only in this "letting go" that he can experience a harvest. God's plan is the same. If we hoard the resources He gives us, it's like a foolish farmer who hoards his seeds.

But when it comes to giving to God, we're sometimes reluctant to surrender the seed. We want to hang on to as much as we can.

A man stepped up to a cosmetic counter to buy his wife some perfume. The saleslady showed him a nice bottle of perfume for \$75, but he said it was too expensive. So she pulled out a smaller bottle for \$50. He said that was still too expensive. Trying to conceal her frustration, she produced a smaller bottle of cologne for \$20. The man shook his head and said, "I'd like for you to show me something really cheap." So she reached under the counter and showed him a mirror.

Sometimes we try to be cheap when it comes to giving to God. A.W. Tozer wrote: "There is a disease, which is particularly virulent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It's called cirrhosis of the giver. It is an acute condition, which renders the patient's hand immobile, when it attempts to move from the billfold to the offering plate. The remedy is to remove the afflicted person from the House of God, since it is clinically observable that this condition disappears in environments such as sports stadiums, shopping malls, and restaurants."

## **2. GOD'S DESIGN: He created me to be a channel of blessing, not a container!**

The Bible says, "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." (2 Corinthians 9:8)

There are some famous water channels and canals in the world. The only purpose of channels is to connect two larger bodies of water, to serve as a conduit. The Erie Canal was built in 1825 to connect the Hudson River in New York with the Great Lakes. The Suez Canal was built in 1869 to connect the Red Sea with the Mediterranean Sea.

In the same way God designed you to be a channel through which He may bless others. He doesn't want you to receive His blessings and store or hoard them for yourself. He designed you to pass on His blessings to others. Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink ...streams of living water will flow from within him." (John 7:37-38)

Giving is a part of God's character. When He created the world, it was to give. The sun gives us heat and light. The flowers give us beauty; the plants and animals give us food. God created Adam and Eve and placed them in this perfectly unselfish environment. His first command to them was to give—give themselves to each other—then they were to give names to all the animals. It was give, give, give. But then the old serpent slithered up to Eve and whispered in her ear, "Hey Eve, you're not getting all you can. There's more. God is holding out on you. Don't you want it ALL? Don't you want to be like God?" The sin Adam and Eve committed was disobeying God so they could get more. That's the poison of materialism.

And since we all inherited Adam's sin nature, we are basically selfish people. As I've mentioned several times, go to the nursery where preschoolers are playing with toys right now; you aren't going to see many of them sharing. Instead if a kid tries to take their toy, you're going to hear a loud objection that says, "MINE!" So, we're born with this nature to get, get, get.

While the world is desperately telling you to grab for more, more, more, Jesus steps up and says, "No. I want you to give." The Bible says, "We must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35)

It's a simple process to catch monkeys in the wild. The natives hollow out a coconut and drill a small hole in the top of the coconut and tie it to a tree. Then they put a piece of fruit inside the coconut. The monkey sticks his and inside the hole to get the fruit, but when he grabs it, his fist won't allow him to remove the candy. But he won't let go. If he would let go, he would escape. But monkeys are so dumb; they allow their greed to keep them trapped until they are captured. All they had to do was to let go and they'd be free. What are you hanging onto what is keeping you trapped?

Can I borrow your hand for a minute? Hold up one of your hands...no, I mean the clean one. Now make a fist, and hold it tight. Some of you aren't doing it, but some of us who don't mind being silly are doing it to make a point so watch us. Hold that fist tighter, don't let go. Squeeze it harder. Keep clenching. All right now, let it go. Relax your hand. Doesn't that feel better? There's no tension or stress. So here's the lesson: Don't go through life like this (fist). God has a better plan—open minds, open hearts, open arms, and open hands.

Former POW and writer, Corrie Ten Boom, wrote: "I've learned that we must hold everything loosely, because when I grip it tightly, it hurts when the Father pries my fingers loose and takes it from me!"

God willing, next Sunday I will be leading a worship service on the Sea of Galilee with our tour group. The Sea of Galilee is a large fresh water lake teeming with life. It abounds with fish and birds of all kinds. Just 80 miles to the south is the Dead Sea, which is aptly named because there is nothing that lives in that water—it's too salty to support any kind of life, but it's fun to float in it. What's the difference between these two bodies of water? The Sea of Galilee takes in fresh water from the springs and rivers that flow into from the north. Then it sends fresh water gushing out through its south outlet called the Jordan River. It receives and it gives life-giving water. The Dead Sea receives the fresh water from the Jordan River, but it has no outlet—it's the lowest point on earth. It only receives and it never gives – that's why it's dead and lifeless. You can drink the water of the Sea of Galilee; in fact it's the main fresh water source of Israel. But if you drink the water in the Dead Sea, it won't kill you, you'll just wish you were dead, it's so full of magnesium and other chemicals that you'll be dealing with it for days.

Generous people are Sea of Galilee people; they receive blessings from God and then they pass it on. Their lives are full of joy and life. Other people are Dead Sea people, they only get, get, get, and they never share—there's no outlet. And those people end up being as a lifeless and toxic as the Dead Sea. Are you a Sea of Galilee giver or a Dead Sea receiver?

### **3. GOD'S CYCLE: The more I give away, the more there is to give away!**

The Bible says, "You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God." (2 Corinthians 9:11). There are many ways to be rich, only one of which is financially.

In Luke 6, Jesus stated several irrevocable spiritual laws. There are immutable laws of nature; water freezes at 32 degrees Fahrenheit. Gravity makes things fall. There is a spiritual law about giving that Jesus expressed this way, "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." (Luke 6:38)

In Jesus' time, people wore robes. When they needed to carry something they often picked up the front hem of the robe to make a basket. That's the image Jesus is employing here. When we give, we receive. And we receive so much more when we give that we have to make a basket because it is full to overflowing.

Jesus said, "Don't store up treasures on earth—give it all always." Growing up I enjoyed reading the humorous column written by Erma Bombeck. She died in 1996. But in one of my favorite columns she wrote about the management of the resources God gives us. "I always had a dream that when I am asked to give an accounting of my life to a Higher Court, it will go like this: 'So empty your pockets. What have you got left of your life? Any dreams that were unfulfilled? Any unused talent that you were given when you were born that you still have left? Any unsaid compliments or bits of love that you haven't spread around?' And I will answer, 'I've nothing to return. I spent everything you gave me. I'm as naked as the day I was born.'"

Here's the cycle. God blesses you, and you give that blessing away. Then He blesses you with more, and you give more away. But if you ever stop the cycle, the flow stops. Randy Alcorn

wrote: "God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving. He gives us more than we need so we can give—generously." (*The Treasure Principle*, p. 95)

Last week I challenged those of you who aren't yet tithing to put God to the test. Try tithing for six months. Give Him the first 10% of your income. If you aren't more blessed in August than you are now, let's just close down this church, because that would mean God lies. But I am 100% certain that God can't lie. He is telling the truth.

I mentioned last week that I get dozens of letters and emails from people who have found God to be faithful. This email came this week from Penny: "My lease on my apartment was up for renewal the end of October last year. When I got my notice, the rent increase was four times the amount of the last increase. I didn't know how I would manage the increase and still take care of the rest of my obligations including giving God His tithe.

That same week I received a notice from the Social Security administration informing me that I should come in and let them go over my account and see if I might be eligible for an increase in benefits. When the counselor finished with all my data, I learned I would receive an increased benefit—and it is DOUBLE the amount of my rent increase. PTL!!! God is good all the time, and all the time, God is good. He is so faithful!"

## CONCLUSION

During this series, I've introduced you to some men and women who understood God's Treasure Truth and were faithful managers of the wealth God gave them. We've all heard of Letourneau University over in Longview. It's a great Christian school training young people to be engineers, teachers, nurses, pilots, and many other professions, all within a Christian environment.

R.G. LeTourneau grew up in Vermont and dropped out of grade school at age 14. He eventually moved to California and got a job leveling the dirt at a large farm. He became a prolific inventor with more than 300 patents, including the bulldozer and offshore oilrigs. During World War II his company supplied 70% of the earth moving equipment used by the Allies.

He and his wife made a decision to give God a reverse tithe. At a time when they didn't have much money and his company was deeply in debt, they decided to give God 90% of their income and to live on 10%. They maintained that percentage for all of their lives. His biography is called *Mover of Men and Mountains*. In it he says, "Some people think I'm all mixed up—that you can't serve the Lord and business, too, but that's just the point. God needs businessmen as partners as well as preachers...My slogan has always been not how much of my money I give to God, but how much of his money I keep for myself. I often say, 'It's all right to give God credit, but He can use cash, too.' They say you can't take it with you, but I say you can send it on ahead, and have it waiting to your credit when you get there. I've discovered that I can't out give God. I shovel it out, and God shovels it back, but God has a bigger shovel." (R.G. Letourneau 1988-1969, *Mover of Men and Mountains*, pp.62, 90)

Go ahead. Try to out give God. If you give with a teaspoon, He gives back with a teaspoon, but His teaspoon is bigger. If you give to God with a shovel, He gives back with a shovel, but His

shovel is bigger. If you give to God with a dump truck; beep beep beep! He gives back with a bigger dump truck. If you give to God in a super oil tanker, He gives back and God's ship is a super-duper-oil tanker. Don't waste your life accumulating a lot of stuff here on earth. Send it on ahead by investing in God's Kingdom. That's the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the Treasure Truth!

## OUTLINE

1. *God owns everything; He allows me to manage some of His wealth.*
2. *I can't take treasure with me to heaven; but I can send it on ahead.*
3. *My heart abides where I invest God's money.*
4. *I honor God when I give back to Him the first and the best.*
5. *The antidote for materialism is the joyful cycle of giving to receive to give even more.*

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"There is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live." *1 Corinthians 8:6*

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"We must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" *Acts 20:35*

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Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*, p. 95

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



*David O. Dykes, Pastor  
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