



Courageously Generous

Living as a steward of all of God's resources

(Note: The following study has been adapted from a book called "The Treasure Principle," by Randy Alcorn.)

Few people, even Bible-believing Christians, grasp the incredible joy available through God's grace. We squander vast resources in our quest for joy, trying to buy happiness. But it never works. According to Jesus, we gain joy in ways that are paradoxical and counterintuitive. We gain what will last only by giving up what won't.

CONSIDER THE PARABLE OF THE HIDDEN TREASURE

Matthew 13:44

⁴⁴The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field.

Q: In what ways are you like this fortunate man? In what ways are you different?

"Jesus has a treasure mentality. He wants us to store up treasures. He's just telling us to stop storing them in the wrong place and start storing them in the right place."

-Randy Alcorn

THE TREASURE PRINCIPLE:

"You can't take it with you, but you can send it on."

Treasure Principle Key #1: "God owns everything. I'm His money manager."

At the root of our thinking about material wealth should be one truth that is easy to understand yet difficult for many of us to accept: God owns everything. His name, and His alone, is on the title deed to the universe.

Picture your wealth – money, home, clothes, equipment, entertainment system - everything. Make sure you don't leave anything out, especially items you tend to take for granted.

1 Chronicles 29:11-14

¹Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is yours, O Lord, and this is your kingdom. We adore you as the one who is over all things.

¹²Wealth and honor come from you alone, for you rule over everything. Power and might are in your hand, and at your discretion people are made great and given strength. ¹³"O our God, we thank you and praise your

glorious name! ¹⁴*But who am I,* and who are my people, that we could give anything to you? Everything we have has come from you, and we give you only what you first gave us!

Q. How closely does this passage line up with your thinking about your possessions?

Q. Whenever we begin to think like “owners” of the things that God has blessed us with, a red flag should appear. If God is the owner, the what is our role?

“A steward manages assets for the owner’s benefit. The steward carries no sense of entitlement to the assets he manages. It’s his job to find out what the owner wants done with his assets, then carry out his will.”

-Randy Alcorn

Treasure Principle Key #2: “My heart always goes where I put God’s money.”

“He who lays up treasures on earth spends his life backing away from his treasures. To him, death is loss. He who lays up treasures in heaven looks forward to eternity; he’s moving daily toward his treasures. To him, death is gain. He who spends his life moving away from his treasures has reason to despair. He who spends his life moving toward his treasures has reason to rejoice.”

-Randy Alcorn

Q. How closely does the preceding quote represent your own views? How does giving make us more joyful people?

Q. What do your checkbook, your credit card statements, your receipts, and your appointment book say about the placement of your treasure....and your heart?

Treasure Principle Key #3: “Heaven, not earth, is my home”

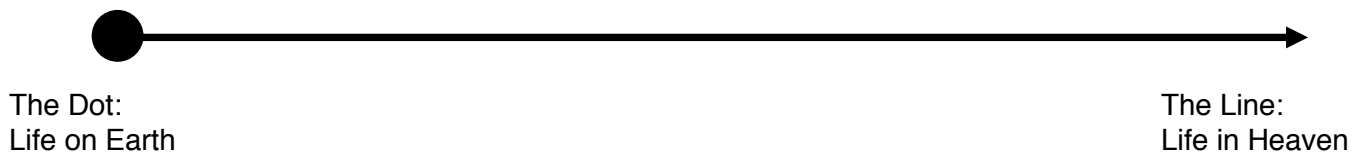
There is a constant struggle that the believer must face as we are tempted to focus too much on the here-and-now rather than on the destination that awaits us all.

“There are many roadblocks to giving: unbelief, insecurity, pride, idolatry, desire for power and control. The raging current of our culture – and often our churches – makes it hard to swim upstream. It’s considered “normal” to keep far more than we give. But I’m convinced that the greatest deterrent to giving is this: the illusion that earth is our home.”

— Randy Alcorn

Q. What draws your heart toward heaven? What draws your heart toward earth?

Treasure Principle Key #4: “I should live not for the dot, but for the line” Consider the following diagram:



“Our present life on earth is the dot. It begins. It ends. It’s brief. But from that dot extends a line that goes on forever. That line is eternity, which Christians will spend in heaven.”

“The person who lives for the dot lives for treasures on earth that end up in junkyards. The person who lives for the line lives for treasures in heaven that will never end. Giving is living for the line.”

— Randy Alcorn

Q. What aspects of this world are most effective at luring your affections away from heaven? What methods have you used to combat this competition for your heart?

Treasure Principle Key #5: “Giving is the only antidote to materialism.”

“The act of giving is a vivid reminder that it’s all about God, not about us. It’s saying I am not the point. He is the point. He does not exist for me. I exist for Him. When I give something away... the magic spell is broken. My mind clears, and I recognize God as owner, myself as servant, and other people as intended beneficiaries of what God has entrusted to me...Only giving breaks me free from the gravitational hold of money and possessions. Giving shifts me to a new center of gravity – heaven.”

— Randy Alcorn

1 Timothy 6:17-19

¹⁷Teach those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which is so unreliable. Their trust should be in God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. ¹⁸Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and generous to those in need, always being ready to share with others. ¹⁹By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may experience true life.

Q. What are some examples of fruit that comes from our giving?

Treasure Principle Key #6: “God prospers me not to raise my standard of living, but to raise my standard of giving.”

2 Corinthians 9:10-11

¹⁰For God is the one who provides seed for the farmer and then bread to eat. In the same way, he will provide and increase your resources and then produce a great harvest of generosity in you. ¹¹Yes, you will be enriched in every way so that you can always be generous. And when we take your gifts to those who need them, they will thank God.

Q. Based on this passage, why does God provide us more than we need?

Final Thoughts

- You may already be changing your thinking and habits about money and giving. As you consider your next step of giving maturity, remember that no efforts will succeed without Christ's involvement in the planning and in the implementation.
- Consider the following questions that are intended to help you clarify your plans toward giving:

How am I doing at my basic giving commitment to God, beginning with my church (1 Corinthians 9:9-12; Galatians 6:6)? Am I giving where I am being spiritually fed?

How much is God leading me to give in freewill offerings? Where should I give them (James 1:5)?

How strategic or worthy are the organizations or individuals I'm supporting or considering supporting?

To whom might I pass along what I've learned about the Treasure Principle? What are some creative ways that I can accomplish this?

Personal Application: Are you Courageously Generous?

1. What does it mean for me to be a good steward?
2. What resources (money, possessions, etc.) do I tend to hold on tightly?
3. What drives me to keep or hold on to resources?
4. When have I given out of excess? When have I given out of sacrifice? What's the difference?
5. What blessings have I seen as a result of giving?

Examples of Personal Goals to help you become Courageously Generous

1. I will affirm God's full ownership of me (I Corinthians 6:19-20) and everything entrusted to me (Psalm 24:1).
2. I will set aside the first-fruits of all I receive, treating it as holy and belonging exclusively to the Lord (Malachi 3:8-10).
3. Out of the remaining treasures God entrusts to me, I will seek to make generous freewill gifts (2 Corinthians 9:1).
4. I will ask God to teach me to give sacrificially to His purpose, including helping the poor and reaching the lost (2 Corinthians 8:3).
5. Recognizing that I cannot take earthly treasures from this world, I will determine to lay them up as heavenly treasures – for Christ's glory and the eternal good of others and myself (Matthew 6:19-21).
6. I will ask God to show me how to lead others to the present joy and future reward of the treasure principle (Hebrews 10:24).