

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 9-8-13 AM NOTES
"SETTLING THE BIG PICTURE ISSUES"
PSALM 24:1-2
#1 in Series, "Managing Your Life"

John 17:4 (HCSB) "I have glorified You on the earth by completing the work You gave Me to do."

Management is the art of bringing ends and means together.

I. We Must Settle the Big Picture Issue of Ownership

"Never have so many Christians believed the lie that their money and possessions are theirs to do with as they please."
—Randy Alcorn

1 Timothy 6:7 (NKJV) "For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out."

A. The Attributes of the Owner

1. He Is the Creator

Genesis 1:1 (NKJV) "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

God created the heavens and the earth *ex nihilo*—out of nothing.

2. He Is Sovereign

Psalms 115:3 (NKJV) "But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases."

3. He Is Sustainer

Colossians 1:17 (HCSB) "He is before all things, and by Him all things hold together."

Romans 11:36 (NKJV) "For of Him and through Him and to Him *are* all things, to whom *be* glory forever. Amen."

B. The Specifics of Ownership

1. Our Time Belongs to God

Ephesians 5:15-16 (ESV) "¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil."

2. Our Body Belongs to God

Psalms 139:13-14 (ESV) "¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well."

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV) “¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?* ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”

3. Our Family Belongs to God

Psalms 127:3 (NASB) “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.”

4. Our Money and Possessions Belong to God

Deuteronomy 8:17-18a (ESV) “¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸ You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth...”

“When we acknowledge God’s ownership, every spending decision becomes a spiritual decision.”

—Larry Burkett

II. We Must Settle the Big Picture Issue of Stewardship

Proverbs 4:26 (NKJV) “Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established.”

Proverbs 16:9 (NKJV) “A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.”

Luke 14:28 (NKJV) “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish *it*?”

Tithing is not the ceiling of our giving; it is the floor of our giving.

Malachi 3:8-9 (NKJV) “⁸ Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, *even* this whole nation.”

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#1 in Series, “Managing Your Life”

In a day of amazing technology and the easy access to scores of “time-saving devices”, you would think that our lives could be lived at a slower pace. Not so! Let me just give one example among the many I

could give of how much time is saved today compared to 50 years ago. I remember when I was growing up that my mother gave a whole day each week to doing laundry. My Mother had more advanced technology than my grandmother (my mother's mother). She had a huge iron pot outside that had a fire built under it. We had to draw water from the well and carry it to the huge iron pot. When the water was hot the dirty clothes were put in the water and stirred by a big stick that resembled a boat paddle. If there were stains, the clothes were rubbed on a wash board until they were cleaned. The process of drawing and heating water was repeated for the rinse cycle. Things have changed! Washing clothes takes almost no effort at all. Most younger adults and children do not even know what a clothes line is. Many households do not even own an iron. You would think that we would have more time for reading, conversation, meditation, and just taking life at a slower pace. Not so! Today most families are afflicted with what has been called "the scurry syndrome". We are constantly scurrying here and there at breakneck speeds. Our days and weekends are crowded with "must do" things. We are constantly on smart phones, tablets, or laptops. We eat expensive, deadly foods on the run because there is no time to cook a nutritious meal. The one income family is a rarity and so the home becomes only a staging area for the next activity. The children must be involved in 20 different things or else they will be behind their peers. There is sports (endless sports), dance, gymnastics, cheerleading, and tutoring for advanced placement classes so they can get in the finest colleges, and on and on. I'm getting fatigued just thinking about it. We get so caught up in the madness and the expectations of our culture that we lose sight of the big picture of what is really important. A more formal way of saying that is that we lose a proper perspective.

Contrast our busy but fruitless lives to Jesus' earthly life. He never seemed to be in a hurry. He always had time for a person in need who came to Him. Look at the time He spent with His disciples. Yet, on the night before He went to the cross, listen to how He summarized His short 33 year life in prayer to His Father in **John 17:4 (HCSB)** "I have glorified You on the earth by completing the work You gave Me to do." Jesus saw the big picture and refused to get distracted by all the demands on His life. Had He given in to those demands of others, they would have robbed Him of accomplishing the very thing the Father sent Him to do.

In contrast to the "scurry syndrome" there is the opposite – the person that is so unmotivated that he wastes his life sitting in front of a TV or computer. The problem is the same. There is a loss of perspective, a failure to see the big picture of why they are here and what God's plan for their life involves.

I have entitled this series, "Managing Your Life". Both of the scenarios I just described give evidence of a poorly managed life. The product of a poorly managed life is guilt, stress, and fruitlessness in matters of eternal value. What do I mean when I speak of "managing"? The American Institute of Management came up with a definition of Management: Management is **the art of bringing ends and means together**. By "ends" they were speaking of desired outcomes, goals, plans, or aspirations. By "means" they were speaking of tools necessary to accomplish the "ends". In this series, we are going to examine some biblical ends for your life and then some biblical means to accomplish those ends. The most important thing for your life in the context of management is "ends". It is possible to use effective means to accomplish the wrong ends. As I've said so many times before, so many people spend their lives climbing the ladder of success (seeking to accomplish their ends) and at the end of their life discover that the ladder they have been climbing is leaning against the wrong wall. It is sad indeed to see someone who has driven themselves for decades to accomplish certain ends in their life only to discover that when they were successful, their unbiblical end left them empty and in reality they wasted their life just as certain as the one who sat around and did nothing.

One of the areas we will talk some about in this series is a proper perspective of money and stuff (the things that money can buy). The reason we are going to spend considerable time in this series on this area is because the most common errors people make on determining the biblical ends has to do with money and material things. Just a few years ago we saw evidence of how many people had their hopes and dreams tied up in money and stuff. We saw how easy it is to have money and the things money can buy as an idol in our lives. After the global economic crisis began in mid-2008, we saw a tragic string of suicides

that seemed to be downplayed by the media. There were many wealthy, looked up to individuals who chose to take their life rather than deal with a life where their unbiblical foundations had collapsed. The acting chief financial officer of Freddie Mac, the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation, hanged himself in his basement. The chief executive of Sheldon Good, a leading U. S. real estate auction firm, shot himself to death while sitting in his red Jaguar. A French money manager who invested the wealth of many of Europe's leading families in Bernard Madoff's Ponzi scheme and lost \$1.4 billion slit his wrists and died in his Madison Avenue office. A Danish senior executive with HSBC Bank hanged himself in the closet of his approximately \$2,000 a night suite in London. When a Bear Stearns executive learned that he would not be hired by JPMorgan Chase which had bought his collapsed firm, he took a drug overdose and jumped to his death from the 29th floor of his office building [The preceding information taken from Tim Keller, *Counterfeit God's*, pages ix, x]. These plus others had obviously adopted some very unbiblical ends in their lives. When these unworthy ends were crushed, they decided that their life wasn't worth living. I realize that these are extreme cases, but they illustrate so many others who may not have taken their lives, but have fallen into despair because their unbiblical ends were crushed.

Before we can effectively manage our lives and make sure that our ends are biblical, there are two "big picture issues" we must settle in our lives. If we are wrong on either of these issues, we will end up with unbiblical ends and thereby wasting our lives.

I. We Must Settle the Big Picture Issue of Ownership

Randy Alcorn summarized well how important this "big picture issue" is. "Never have so many Christians believed the lie that their money and possessions are theirs to do with as they please." [Randy Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, pages xv, xvi]. Let me give you a summary statement about ownership that is taught in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation: God is the owner of everything and we are simply the managers or stewards of God's stuff. When you were born, you had no designer clothes on; you were naked. When you die you'll have clothes on, but it will only be because someone at the funeral home dressed you. **1 Timothy 6:7 (NKJV)** "For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out." All that we use from birth to death belongs to God and it is by His mercy and common grace that we have it to use. **Psalms 24:1 (NKJV)** "The earth *is* the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein." The air you breathe is His; the space you take up on planet earth is His. The food you eat is His. The money you have was made from trees that He grew and metal that He put in the ground. The house you live in was made from wood, bricks, and concrete that were taken from His creation. The car that you drive was made from metal (and a lot of plastic) that came from His earth. I could go on and on, but hopefully you get the picture. When the fact of His ownership sinks in, it changes how you look at everything. There are three perfections (attributes) of this one true God that we need to know and meditate on to get the big picture issue of ownership settled.

A. The Attributes of the Owner

1. He Is the Creator

In the passage that we read at the beginning of the message (Psalms 24:1-2), we saw that the earth and its fullness ("everything in it" HCSB) belongs to God. We are told that He founded it and established it. Both of those words emphasize the fact that He created the earth and all that is in the earth. His creation of the earth is the basis of His ownership. This explains the fact that when God inspired the Bible, the first thing that He let's us know in no uncertain terms is **Genesis 1:1 (NKJV)** "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." The enemy of our souls, Satan, the devil knows that if he can get us to deny this basic truth that God created the earth *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) and get us to substitute evolution for creation, we will be wrong about ownership and thereby get everything else in life twisted and perverted. Learn this: Everything belongs to Him! He didn't put a "no trespassing" sign on the mountains, but they are His. He didn't ration the fresh air and the breezes that blow, but they are His! He doesn't charge a royalty on the beautiful songs that the birds sing, but every bird and every song is His. Puny man can rearrange God's creation, use God's creation, but we can't add to it; He is the creator, the ONLY creator.

2. He Is Sovereign

He has the right to do what He pleases with that which He owns (and remember that He owns everything). God is sovereign over His creation. **Psalms 115:3 (NKJV)** “But our God *is* in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.” We have no right to argue or question or demand our way concerning how God uses, deploys, or distributes His creation. He does not need our permission and He is not obligated to give us His reasons for what He does with that which He has created.

3. He Is Sustainer

Colossians 1:17 (HCSB) “He [God the Son] is before all things, and by Him all things hold together.” God sustains, holds together His creation.

These truths are summarized in **Romans 11:36 (NKJV)** For of Him [sovereign] and through Him [sustainer] and to Him *are* all things [creator], to whom *be* glory forever. Amen.” I want you to walk out of this room today understanding down deep at the core of your being that God owns everything and you, in reality, own nothing. That is a part of the big picture you must get. Without this truth being the basis of how you view everything you deal with here on earth, you will not come up with the correct big picture and you will adopt some “ends” that are very unbiblical.

B. The Specifics of Ownership

Sometimes we need to break down big truths into smaller bites. It is one thing to say that God owns everything, but “everything” is hard to wrap your arms around. What are some specific things He owns?

1. Our Time Belongs to God

In reality, it is God’s time. God created the time dimension. All time is His by right of creation. The time that we have here on God’s earth is allotted to us by God and we are responsible to Him alone for how we spend or invest His time. He has given us instruction as to how we are to use His time. **Ephesians 5:15-16 (ESV)** “¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.”

2. Our Body Belongs to God

In reality, it is His body and not ours. **Psalms 139:13-14 (ESV)** “¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother’s womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.” The whole so called “pro-choice movement” is standing on a faulty foundation. The foundation of this satanically inspired movement is that a woman’s body is her own and therefore she has the right to decide if she want to birth or abort he baby inside her body. The problem is that it is not her body. Your body belongs to God. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NKJV)** “¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit *who is* in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? ²⁰ For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”

3. Our Family Belongs to God

We say, “These are MY children”, and I understand that you mean that you are their legal mother or father, but in reality they are God’s children that you are raising for Him. **Psalms 127:3 (NASB)** “Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward.” They are His and He can call them to whatever He chooses; He can bring into their lives whatever He chooses. They are His by right of creation.

4. Our Money and Possessions Belong to God

Your investments, savings, house, car, clothes, golf clubs, boat, etc. all belong to God. You may object a little on this one. You may be thinking, “I am the one who worked for this; I am the one who made smart investment decisions. **Deuteronomy 8:17-18a (ESV)** “¹⁷ Beware lest you say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.’ ¹⁸ You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth...” Because it all belongs to God, when we obey what He says about tithes and offerings, we are simply taking out hand off what belongs to Him. Larry Burkett said, “When we acknowledge God’s ownership, every spending decision becomes a spiritual decision.” [Quoted in Howard Dayton *Your Money Counts*, Page 17].

That is not an exhaustive list of the areas of ownership, but hopefully it helps you to see a little more what the Bible is speaking of when it says that God owns everything.

II. Settle the Big Picture Issue of Stewardship

Seeing God as the owner of all things is only the beginning. We can give mental assent to that and then go on to use God's possessions the way we want to without even consulting Him. The fact is that we own nothing and our task is to manage that which belongs to God that He has placed under our care. The biblical word for one who manages the property of another is "steward". Some translations translate that word "manager". Jesus gave us many stewardship parables. These are the common themes in those parables: God is the owner; the owner entrusts some valuable things to the steward; the steward must give an account to the owner as to how he used the owner's possessions. That is not hard to understand!

Let's look briefly at two of those specifics of ownership we just went over (we will go much more in depth in weeks to come). First, let's examine our stewardship of time. God owns all time. One day you will give account to God how you spent His time. One thing you cannot say when you give account is "I just didn't have enough time." God allots to us all the time needed to accomplish all that He desires for us to do. As we will see in weeks to come, we must have a prayed through plan to manage the time He has given us to accomplish what He has for us to do. Very few people have a prayed through, God guided plan for their use of time. When you don't have a plan, you end up wasting your life by allowing other people and circumstances and activities you find pleasurable to control your time. Proverbs is a great book to spend time in to learn how to manage your life. **Proverbs 4:26 (NKJV)** "Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established." **Proverbs 16:9 (NKJV)** "A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." Jesus advocated planning when he said in **Luke 14:28 (NKJV)** "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has *enough* to finish it"? God owns the time that He has allotted to you and you will give an account as to how you have used it.

The second specific of ownership and our stewardship is our possessions. Every material possession you have, every account you have, every investment you have in reality belongs to Him. When it comes to money and possessions, the question is not, "Do I desire this" or "Can I afford this"; the question is, "Does God desire that I have or that I purchase this". As with time, you must have a prayed through, God directed, biblically based plan for managing the possessions that God has placed under your control. Everyone's plan would have some things in common. God has given all of His children a way to be reminded of His ownership and to give testimony that you view all that you have as His. I am speaking of the tithe. The word tithe means tenth part. The tithe is a tenth of your income. The tithe was established before the Mosaic Law; it was incorporated into the Mosaic Law; it was practiced by the early church, and it was taught by many of the early church fathers. Tithing is not our payment to God so that we can use the other 90% as we please; it is the reminder and testimony that we see the big picture – all that we have belongs to God. Tithing is not the ceiling of our giving; it is the floor of our giving. Tithing is a great place to start, but it is not a good place to finish. The Bible says that if you don't tithe, you are robbing God (Malachi 3:8-9). Whatever drastic changes that you have to make in your life to begin tithing, make them – run, don't walk. Tithing is just the beginning of a life of extravagant giving. A steward's approach to life changes the way you look at every material thing and your standard of living.

CONCLUSION

In this series, we are going to look at some of the specific areas of ownership and look at what the Bible says about the proper ends and means of obeying and glorifying God in each area. This series has the potential (because of the truths we will be laying out) to be life transforming and to enable you on that day that as a steward you will be called to give an account of how you used the owner's resources to hear the most beautiful words that I could imagine – "Well done, good and faithful servant."