

Mind Your Own Business
Proverbs 21:20
“The Buck STARTS Here”

Opener

Describe a time in your life in which you invested time and energy and then were able to see a huge return on your investment. Was the return immediate? If the return was not immediate, how did you feel about having to wait to realize the success of your investment?

Introduction

Many times we can be torn between what our culture calls us to do to gain wealth and what God calls us to do. We may even wonder if God wants us to have wealth. We certainly aren't accustomed to gaining it according to God's time table. Our culture assures us that we can have whatever we want whenever we want it, and however we want it. Consider what Paul says in his letter to the Galatians: ⁷ *Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant.* ⁸ *Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.* ⁹ *So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up.* —Galatians 6:7-9

Proverbs tells us how it is that we can expect to build the wealth God desires for us. Think about how God might define wealth and luxury differently than our culture defines it: ²⁰ *The wise have wealth and luxury, but fools spend whatever they get.* —Proverbs 21:20

What is our time table for experiencing the wealth God promises if we build it His way? Certainly not our own. We are programmed to get what we want when we think we might want it. God however works in a different time frame. Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, “For everything there is a season. . .” We are totally unaccustomed to waiting for God's seasons. Solomon understood our nearsightedness, and yet was able to trust also in a God that was bigger than he. What is our level of trust in God for providing us with what we need? Do we trust him to know our needs better than ourselves, to define our wants from our needs more clearly than we can do it for ourselves? If we truly want the wealth God promises, are we willing to see wealth from his perspective? Are we willing to do the work He calls us to in order to achieve that wealth?

⁹ *What do people really get for all their hard work?* ¹⁰ *I have seen the burden God has placed on us all.* ¹¹ *Yet God has made everything beautiful for its own time. He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.* —Ecclesiastes 3:9-11

Digging In!

- Based on what you may have read or heard in the past, what is your impression of how God feels about wealth?

² *(Abram was very rich in livestock, silver, and gold.)* –Genesis 13:2

¹⁴ *After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram, “Look as far as you can see in every direction –north and south, east and west. ¹⁵ I am giving all this land, as far as you can see, to you and your descendants as a permanent possession. ¹⁶ And I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted!*

¹⁷ *Go and walk through the land in every direction, for I am giving it to you.* –Genesis 13:14-17

¹⁰ *When Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored his fortunes. In fact, the Lord gave him twice as much as before!* –Job 42:10

- These are just a couple of passages describing how God gifts His people. Does this give you a different picture of how God feels about wealth?

¹ *“If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully keep all his commands that I am giving you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the world. ² You will experience all these blessings if you obey the Lord your God:*

³ *Your towns and your fields will be blessed.*

⁴ *Your children and your crops will be blessed. The offspring of your herds and flocks will be blessed.*

⁵ *Your fruit baskets and breadboards will be blessed.*

⁶ *Wherever you go and whatever you do, you will be blessed.* –Deuteronomy 28:1-6

- Why might it be important for God to discipline us before bestowing wealth upon us? How does discipline change our perspective on “stuff?” Think also about how He wants us to grow our material wealth referred to in Proverbs 21:20.

- What could God expect us to do if we had no discipline? Would you do the same thing with your money if you knew there would be no consequences for using it badly?

- Which has more value for you, the discipline referred to in Deuteronomy 28 or those things referred to as the “blessings?” Why?

God wants pleasure for us

¹⁷ *He will listen to the prayers of the destitute.
He will not reject their pleas. —Psalm 102:17*

²⁷ *But give great joy to those who came to my defense.
Let them continually say, "Great is the Lord,
who delights in blessing his servant with peace!" —Psalm 35:27*

*But by means of their suffering, he rescues those who suffer.
For he gets their attention through adversity. —Job 36:15*

We want everything on our time table. We want our returns when we want them with no eye for the eternal vision of God.

Management 101

➤ Sometimes it is difficult to see how our handling of our finances has anything to do with our relationship to God. What is the connection? Why does God care about how we spend or make our money?

➤ What are the Biblical principles of wealth building as you understand them?

²⁴ *Give freely and become more wealthy;
be stingy and lose everything.*

²⁵ *The generous will prosper;
those who refresh others will themselves be refreshed.*

²⁶ *People curse those who hoard their grain,
but they bless the one who sells in time of need. —Proverbs 11:24-27*

➤ What do we gain by giving?

➤ How is it that our spending relates to our wealth?

⁶ *Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. —2 Corinthians 9:6*

Impact!

[A group of] six-year-olds [was] asked to draw a picture of and rewrite the ending of the classic story *The Ant and the Grasshopper* in any way they would like, but it needed to involve the Grasshopper asking the Ant for help. About half of the first-graders took the general view that since the Grasshopper was undeserving, the Ant refused to help him. The other half changed the end to say that the Ant told the Grasshopper to learn his lesson, and then he gave the Grasshopper half of what he had. Then a little boy stood up and gave this version of the tale:

After the Grasshopper came to the Ant and begged for food, the Ant unhesitatingly gave all the food he had. Not half or most, but everything. The boy was not finished, however, and cheerfully continued, "The Ant didn't have any food left, so he died. But then the Grasshopper was so sad that the Ant had died that he told everyone what the Ant had done to save his life. And the Grasshopper became a good Grasshopper." --TOMOKO MATSUOKA, FULLTIME VOLUNTEER, FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, JAPAN.

- Do you feel different about being the ant in the new ending of this fable written by the child? Why or why not?
- Most of us would rather see ourselves as the industrious ant in this old fable, but are we really the ant if we take a look from God's perspective?
- How does the idea expressed in this new ending give us a different perspective on the hard work we did to store things away for a time of need? Is God asking us to be diligent when we work and in our saving to benefit only ourselves?
- How are we really laying everything down for the benefit of others around us? What is our commitment to doing this financially? What about with the other gifts God has given us? Are we afraid of loss?
- Is there a drawback to having material wealth?