

Worshiping Mammon – The Subversive Gospel • Founded In Truth Ministries

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MAIN VERSES

[Philippians 3:20](#) • [Acts 4:33](#) • [Matthew 6:24](#) • [1 Timothy 6:10](#) • [Colossians 3:5](#) • [Acts 2:44-45](#) • [Acts 20:35](#) • [Ephesians 4:28](#) • [Deuteronomy 6:7](#) • [Deuteronomy 11:19](#) • [Leviticus 23:2](#) • [Proverbs 30:8-9](#) • [Luke 12:16-21](#)

Last week we spoke about the subversive gospel—how the gospel of our King means you cannot not be subversive if you align yourself with the message of God, with God's kingdom, with the message of new creation, with the truth that the world as it is is not God's kingdom. The world as it is needs restoration. It needs to become a new heaven and a new earth. It needs light. And if that is our mindset, if that is our vocation—to be an ambassador, to be a messenger of reconciliation, to be an emissary of Yeshua—guys, you are a revolutionary. I don't know how to put it any more bluntly: you're a rebel against the world. Our mission is to subvert the world around us, to overthrow it and push it down to where it belongs, so that the kingdom Yeshua planted continues forward. And when we carry that banner of the gospel forward, the world notices. And the reason the world notices is because it's contrary to what the world has set up as a standard. The Gospel offends greatly.

Now, there's a difference between us offending and the Gospel offending. Some of us get that confused. The Gospel—the message of the Gospel—offends the world around us because it demands repentance. It demands a conviction, an understanding that God will do something greater through His people to bring His kingdom to earth.

Philippians speaks about how we're not citizens of this world. Being a citizen of the United States is not something we're supposed to treat as our primary focus. That's not where I'm putting all my energy. We're sojourners here, aliens here, just like Abraham. Very happy to be a part of this great nation. But I'm even happier that Philippians says we're citizens of a greater kingdom—the kingdom of heaven, God's authority.

The Gospel's Offense to Empire

Last week we spoke about how, in the first century, the message of the gospel was so subversive toward the Roman Empire and the imperial cult. Calling Yeshua Lord—Kyrios—or calling Him the Son of God was a direct affront to the worship of Caesar. A lot of people died because they refused to say that Caesar was their Kyrios. They stood before the courts of the greatest man in the world and said, "Yeshua is Kyrios, and He is my King." In Acts, Paul did this right there under the nose of Caesar himself, right there under the court of the most powerful secular government in the world. He stood up boldly and proclaimed, "Kyrios. Yeshua is my Lord, Yeshua is my King." Acts doesn't tell us exactly what happened to him afterward, but we know he got his head chopped off. But not before he proclaimed the gospel of our King.

We went on to talk about how to subvert different areas of our lives that the world has really pushed on us. One of those areas is the idea of self—how everything is about me, how everything is about I, how becoming a new creation in the Lord means Yeshua is my personal Savior, God made the kingdom of heaven to save me, and everything is about me. When I go to a fellowship, everything is about me. That's what the world tells us because the world revolves around you. If you're outside the kingdom, it surely does—gravitational pull. But when you enter into covenant with God, when you enter into the greater kingdom, you begin to learn that it's not about you. It's about Him. It's about everything He is. It's about replicating His kingdom. It's about subverting the world and establishing the kingship of the Lord.

Worshipping Mammon

So this week's message is on the worship of mammon—worshipping mammon. I came up with the title about halfway through the message, and I kind of liked it, because that's exactly what we're talking about today: the idea of success. You guys like success, right? That's what we're told to be. We're told to be what? Successful. That's a foundational principle in this country: life, liberty, pursuit of happiness. We all know that "happiness" isn't really being in a good mood, relaxed, having shalom in your life. Happiness is getting wealthy. Happiness is pursuing success. Happiness is getting the big house. Happiness is getting the big car. Happiness is getting that stable job.

It's fascinating because the world's definition of success hasn't really changed in the past 2,000 years. In ancient Rome—as we were discussing last week—there were three main things that determined your success in life: citizenship, prosperity, and security. And only an elite few had all three. Most in Rome did not have any. If you were a slave, success was getting your next meal. I mean, woo, yes, I am successful!

Can you go over to the laptop? In the top left-hand corner, there's a button you can hit to kill the background because I know it's flashing.

It's fascinating because highly ambitious slaves—most people were slaves. If you were highly ambitious, you would work really hard. Your identity and your definition of success was paying off your debt, the debt that made you a slave in the first place. You could buy your freedom, and then you'd align yourself with your master for security. It's pretty successful for the role you had, the lot you got—pretty successful. But for most, success remained elusive.

Those who were successful lived a life of hedonism where their only pursuits were pleasure and self-indulgence, where feeling good and having things were the fulfillment of one's life. But I'm very glad that the definition of success has changed so much in the 21st century that we live in. (That was a joke. That was horrible.) The majority of Americans see influence, wealth, and class as the definition of success. Would you disagree?

The Pursuit of Success

What did the baby boomers tell us when we were kids? "If you want to be successful, you need to make sure you do well in high school and go to college. And you need to get into a good school and get that degree—at least four years." And then, once you get that degree, you can get a what?

(Someone responds, but the answer is unclear.)

Yeah, that was unexpected. See, I know my mom did not expect school costs to go up like 600% or something. I know that, right? You get a degree so you could get a what? A job. Not just any job, but a good job. And what defines a good job?

A good job is one where you find happiness and fulfillment, where when you're there it feels like you're doing a hobby—something you really enjoy and find fulfillment in. That's supposed to be a good job, according to—no, who cares about that? A good job is where the money rains down, right? That's how it's defined—that's how far you go. Love that. We have made it a motto: we hold the keys to success in our hands. So we spend most of our lives dedicated to that pursuit. And the pursuit of happiness is defined as success.

The ancient Romans would offer sacrifices to their gods and Caesar in hopes that their prayers of success would be answered. Today, I feel like we've fallen into the same trap—offering even more costly sacrifices to the Caesar of success that we have. I tend to see people offering our

health. I tend to see people offering their time. I tend to see people even offering their families just to pursue this predetermined idea of success in this country.

In the business world, we actually have animal-themed metaphors just to describe the brutality and dehumanizing efforts of how people devote themselves to success. Let's see—what was a metaphor? Like "dog eat dog"? Yeah, you've heard that before, right? "It's a dog eat dog business." What does that mean? It means that at some point you're going to have to throw off all ethical restraint just to make it to the top, and that's accepted. Dog eat dog. Or how about "rat race"? It's a rat race—the idea of crawling your way to the front of the pack so that you can be successful.

It's fascinating because our own vocabulary should clue us in on the obsessive pursuit and how it may not be exactly what God intended for His creation. This message may be controversial. This message is not easy to give, and it will not be easy to hear. But we're going to try to read a lot of scripture. And the idea behind this message is to gain insight: Do we want insight? Do we want insight into God's kingdom? Do we want insight into what scripture says? Good, good. Then let's go there.

We're often tempted to embrace the world's version of success, where your worth and value are based on what you produce. If you're not working, you're not producing. Everything about you and your life and success is in your hands. Instead of measuring it by your faithfulness—I mean, that's how believers should measure their standard of success, but it's not something we speak about. But when you see your friends with bigger houses, with new Xboxes, with new cars, it's tempting. It's tempting to feel like you're not successful. When you see a friend who gets to take his wife on vacation five times a year, it makes you kind of feel like a failure. Maybe someone else got a better job than you.

Men, I'm speaking to men. I can relate to men a little bit. Any of you guys ever feel like you're not a good enough provider to your family?

Success Found in Faithfulness

Anybody? Just me? A few people? I mean, I talk to lots of friends. I talk to some friends who are poor, and I talk to some friends who are rich, and everybody says the same thing. I constantly, constantly doubt myself, and I feel like I'm not a good enough provider. I'm not successful enough. And this leads to what? Leads to depression, leads to sadness, feeling like a failure. Despite your wife and kids eating every meal, despite them having a house, despite them having health insurance, whether it's forced on you or not, they got it, something. Despite everything

that they have, we still feel like failures. Why? Because the standard we are given is unreachable.

And these times I like to remember when Yeshua stood before Pilate. Imagine the circumstances. You have the contrast, the deep contrast of one man who represents the world's kingdom standing there, and then you have the man that represents the kingdom of the divine God of creation. Pilate, the climax of Roman success, representing the largest military strength in all of the world, right? The imperial might of the Roman Empire standing right there. And then yet in the place that was built on the foundation of human pride stood the image of the kingdom of God standing right there in the midst of the palace. An innocent king that was mocked, facing punishment that was to be given to lawbreakers.

This king would not reign by doing a good business deal. This king would not reign because he's getting some great dividends on his investment that he made. This king would not reign because he was able to buy a big car or a big palace. This king would reign by being lifted up on the Roman cross. That was the most horrifying and shameful way to die in the Roman Empire. He would reign by suffering the punishment because of the sins of his people and ultimately the world. You see how the deep contrast is coming out. If we subvert the Caesar of success in today's world, we must follow the example of Christ, the example of Messiah. That's easier said than done, but we have an example, just like the early believers did.

Three Ways to Subvert Success

There's three ways that I believe that we can become the ultimate subversive towards the world's standards today. One, recognize that success is found in faithfulness of God. That's your job as an ambassador and emissary in the kingdom. Your success is going to be measured in your faithfulness and your servitude to the kingdom. How do we do that? Guys, I'm very blessed to be a part of a community. You ever heard that term, spirit-filled? And we have that definition, and it kind of sways depending on which fellowship you go to. Guys, I'm very, very, very excited to be part of a community that's bold and not ashamed to even receive that label. People in this room right now understand what the fullness of the power of God looks like. That's the first step in recognizing how to subvert the world standards of success, how to rebel against it, overthrow it. Number two, this one we don't like, embrace suffering. Number three, pursue unity and love. This was Yeshua's example before Pilate as he stood there. This was Yeshua's example every single day that he walked.

Not From Here

What are you doing? That's totally not normal, bro. Because I'm not from here. This is not my kingdom. I represent a kingdom of my father. And it's far different than the one that's down here. Caesar's ruled by conquering. Yeshua ruled by being conquered to the world's standards. Caesar's ruled by brute force and might. Yeshua ruled by laying down his life as an example of the gravity of God's love. Caesar stayed in power by punishing those who rebelled. Yeshua overcame the forces of sin and death by taking upon himself the punishment of a rebel. Fascinating. It's fascinating because this concept of understanding God's kingdom makes no sense in contrast to the world. The kingdom of God has literally flipped upside down. It's a kingdom that is on its head to the world.

Paul states something very, very, very compelling. He says that all he does comes from God. In [1 Corinthians 2:3](#), we see when he's speaking, he was like, I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and the power. Everybody say the demonstration of the Spirit and the power. That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

The Power of Weakness

Now this is a fun verse to memorize in school, but what Paul's saying is, listen guys, I didn't have to present the gospel in some type of really like fantastic way. I didn't have to blow it up, put some sprinkles on top to make it nice and sweet. I didn't have to change any details of what took place on the earth when Yeshua walked, the day that he died and the day that he resurrected. I spoke out of the boldness that God gave me through His Spirit and I carry this power with me every single day that I walk. Even in my weakness, I am made strong through Him.

This is a fantastic example because that is not what the world wants you to do. The world teaches, "No, it's by your power. It's by your power. You give up power, you're a weakling. You give up power, you're uneducated, you're not wise." You give up success chasing the rat race? You're just stupid. You just say it like it is. You're foolish. The world around us tells us that we are the makers of our future. We create our destiny. Of course, we can get into a big philosophical discussion about, well, our choices do define our destiny. And the destiny we step into is defined in our life choices. That's not really what I'm speaking about.

The world puts the pressures of being the blessing provider on your shoulders. Instead of allowing the faithfulness to prevail in recognizing that blessing only comes from one source,

and that source is the Father. And it's not fair. And it's not a fair standard to push on to others. But that's the contrast between the two kingdoms. The first step in subverting the Caesar of success is to recognize that success is found only in the power of the Holy Spirit.

That sounds kind of churchy, don't it? I mean, come on. When I was writing this, I'm like, hey, that sounds churchy. Do you guys want to know why it sounds churchy? Because it is. Thousands of churches teach this every single week. Every single week. Do you want to know why they teach this every single week? Because it's true. Because it's true.

Don't Be Anxious

See, I'm going to look at the next few verses in Matthew chapter 6. And I'll go, we know this, yeah, you don't have to read that. We go to Matthew chapter 6, 25 through 34. And it's when Yeshua is speaking and he's talking about, don't be anxious. Don't be stressed out. Don't be stressed out about making that dollar tomorrow. Don't be stressed out about, I've got to get a master's degree before I can even reach any type of standard of success in the world. Don't be stressed out about that because that's not the standards that God has put on you. All right?

Birds flying around, naked, guys taking care of them? I mean, let's come on. Oh, you think they build some barns to store up food? Plants? No, God takes care of them. The flowers in the ground? Oh man, what are they gonna do? God takes care of them. Does God love you more than a bird? Now, birds are pretty. I think Chris did a thing for birds—birds are pretty. But God loves you more than the prettiest bird. How much more is he going to make sure that you're gonna be okay?

You may not be okay in the standards of the world, but you're going to be fine. Birds are fine and the flowers are fine. And I find that interesting because we usually read this section of Scripture to speak about, you know, don't be stressed and don't be anxious. Guys, this is the king talking and saying that God is going to provide. Why do we doubt? Because we're surrounded by a world that we believe is pushing the correct standards and we accept them.

Redefining Success

The second way to subvert the Caesar of success—it's by redefining success in our lives. Instead of agreeing with the world's definition of wealth, luxury, stability being success, we must redefine it according to the scriptures. We can imagine all day long what that looks like, but success comes from relying on God's spirit to empower us. It is what it is. Success in the believing world looks like emulating Christ, emulating Yeshua, being an emissary. That means

when you're an emissary—who was that guy's name in the book, in Esther? Haman, right? He was an emissary of the King. He had the seal, which meant he carried the authority of the King wherever he walked. It sounds too churchy, but it is true. He was the emissary of the King. Therefore, when he walked in the room, he represented the King.

Now the thing about Haman is he did not represent the King very well, did he? And what happened to him? Yeah, it didn't end up well. He was not very successful in his vocation in the kingdom. Our job is to emulate Yeshua, is to walk like Yeshua, is to walk with the boldness that Yeshua had, is to walk with the power that Yeshua had and the authority of the kingdom because you're a banner carrier. You're carrying the flag of the kingdom. I'm going to assert that's what defines success. A few weeks ago, I spoke about suffering. If you guys remember, how to prepare for the end of the world. It's a great message. We quickly see in Scripture how suffering is embraced as a means of emulating Yeshua. That's not churchy at all because we don't hear that everywhere, anywhere. Messianic fellowship, no one talks about that aspect. Follow me. Take up your cross and follow me. Talking to Peter over breakfast. You're going to get your arms stretched out.

You're going to be taken somewhere you don't want to go. And this was how Peter was going to die in order that he would glorify God. Suffering. Why? Because suffering is fertile soil for God's love to sprout to its fullest form. That's literally what Yeshua did on the cross. That was the means of showing forth God's love. Think about that. Father, forgive them. Spitting on them? I mean, how many of you guys would spit back? I don't know. No. Talk about their mom a little bit. I mean, you're in a lot of pain. You're up there, you're naked, you're whipped. I mean, say something. Father, forgive them because I love them.

The Blood of the Martyrs Is the Seed of the Church

The early Christians embraced suffering, torture, even martyrdom because they knew that their sufferings gave them the opportunity to best proclaim Jesus, the gospel message. See, early Christians could not evangelize by going and renting out the stadium for a day. We're going to have some guest speakers. We're going to have Paul come in. We're going to have James come in. We're going to have a big old conference, teleconference. It's going to be great. They didn't have that opportunity to come together in the public places and preach the gospel. The only place where they had a public microphone to announce and say whatever they wanted to for just a short period of time was in court. Why do you think Paul did what he did at the end of Acts? Can you imagine trying to wiggle out of court? You're gonna die. I proclaim Yeshua is my King. Yeshua is my Lord. I proclaim that He was sent to save you and you and you. I proclaim

that God's love is more powerful than anything you can do for me. I mean, can you imagine if that was you? Man, it's so inspiring but so scary at the same time.

Believers flocked at the opportunity in the first two and three centuries. Something that we can probably never fully understand or grasp. Fascinating. The church father, Tertullian, he says that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. And that's why he said that. They planted the seeds any way they could. The intentional embracing of suffering spoke volumes to the world that was dulled and desensitized by its own pursuit of success. Why would you die? Why? Live. Successful. Keep going. Sometimes that suffering comes in the form of job loss. Sometimes that suffering comes in the form of loss of money or friendships. Sometimes it comes at the cost of honor in the scope of the secular world. Sometimes it comes at the loss of one's life. All of those prices above are fair to stand for the gospel. Suffering is the most impactful way to kill the Caesar of success.

Subverting Success

We subvert success by realizing that bigger things are not always better. We subvert success by kneeling before the poor to serve them. We subvert success when we use our hard-earned money that the world uses to define success, and we give it to other people. Who would do that? That's stupid. It's foolish. Who would go to work to give? The world will never understand how someone could just give money to another person who needs it. I mean, the world does it sometimes, but as a lifestyle, because that's your faith, it could be a family to help pay for their groceries. It could be a family to help send their kids to the summer camp or whatnot. It could be to empower your fellowship to go to the next level. Whatever it is, why would you not keep the money that makes you successful? It makes no sense because you're a rebel. No one would intentionally live below their means to have more to give. Believers did. We subvert success as business people when we downsize, take pay cuts, work less in order to spend more time with our families, refuse a promotion that would have us move or work more. Doesn't make sense. Why would you do that? Well, I have a different set of standards of success.

The kingdom that Yeshua preached was totally upside down, especially when it hit the Roman Empire and even here. Seriously, it should shock our mindset to think about how radical the pursuits of a Yeshua freak, if I can say that, is.

An Upside-Down Resume

See, Paul was all about showing the strength of your faith, but seemingly he did it through bragging about his weaknesses and downfalls. It's fascinating. In [1 Corinthians 11](#), it's fascinating because it's as if Paul is writing a resume. Now, you guys filled out a resume? I filled out a resume before, right? What do you put in your resume? You put the things that you're good at. Sometimes you put the things that you want to be good at. You definitely don't put the things that you're not good at. Start the resume out. I am not good at Visual Basic. Nah, not good at that. Not good at Macs. Good at PC, not good at Macs. Not good with people. Nah. Not a fast typer. Not, not, not, not.

The resumes of the first century believers, this is how great my God is because this is how weak I am. Isn't that amazing?

The Crown of the Wall

In Paul's day, the Roman armies, when they attacked a city, it would usually be a walled city, a walled town or whatnot. And what surrounds a city typically? A big wall, right? So we've got a problem. We've got to get over the wall. And they've got Jasons all up there yelling and screaming at us, throwing rocks at us and spears at us and dumping oil on us. We just want to get over the wall. So we can either go through the gate, right, with a big old battering ram, push the gate open, or we can bring some big old ladders in and try to get up over the wall. Alright? And that was a big deal. It was a death-defying stunt just to get over the stupid wall. And every soldier wanted to get over that wall first because it showed how brave they were if they were the first one in. If you hopped the wall and died first, at least you were the first, right?

And Josephus is speaking about when the Temple Mount was destroyed. It's fascinating because he was discussing this general—what was his name? A kind of crazy Roman general who overtook it. It wasn't Nero. It was the Roman general who came and destroyed the temple. Thank you, Titus. So he was talking about Titus coming in and Antonio's fortress. They took down multiple walls so they could have battering rams to come in and break into the temple. But he was watching his men. He stood up on high, like on a little stoop or a tower or something, and he was looking down on his men to figure out which ones were the bravest, so he could basically award them, right? And so they're constantly watching the brave soldiers because how do you keep employees inspired? You give them a little employee of the month thing if they do a good job. Same thing with soldiers. And so if you were the first soldier over the wall of a city, you would get an award, and it was called, let me see if I can pronounce it, it was called Carana Morales, the crown of the wall. And it was a really big deal. It meant that you were the one who made it over the wall first, which meant that you were in front first, which

means that you were fighting first, which means that you didn't slow down for nothing. You got over the wall. You breached it.

Fleeing in a Basket

In Paul's upside-down resume, we read about the time where he managed to get over the city wall. However, in his case, it wasn't a victorious entry into a city. It was fleeing the city under the guise of night, and he was shoved in a basket and lowered down. And he's actually telling people about this. He's cowering, scared. Oh, man, if they don't catch me, they're going to kill me. Right? No crown of the wall award for you, Paul.

In fact, if we read Paul's letters, we see not only him speaking about the successful moments of ministry, but we see him cite and speak in detail about the beatings, about the shipwrecks, the public humiliation, the imprisonment that he received, and the time that God seemingly abandoned him for a day out in what, sea? Yeah. He speaks of the dangers posed by fellow Judeans, Christian hypocrites, and common themes. He mentions exhaustion, hunger, poverty. In this victorious Christian life that God promised, this was his resume for life. Where are his list of achievements? Where is his sense of pride of all God has done for him? I mean, wouldn't that kind of fuel the fact that he's the true apostle to go out to the Goryim, to the Gentiles? He's the one true one. Well, somehow that's the whole point that he was trying to make. Paul lists his weaknesses, his hardships, his failures in order to prove that he is in fact the true apostle. And the super apostles who are out there handing out more impressive letters of resumes and how God, they're the frauds or the fakes in Corinth.

The Upside-Down Kingdom

Being a follower of Yeshua and a citizen of his upside down kingdom means that that would normally be held up as worthy of praise and proof of authority, struck down. And there's a different measurement, there's a different standard put in place. "I want to be first in the kingdom." "Oh, do you? Well, let me show you how to do that." "Right, be a servant." "Let me show you how to do that. Take your clothes off, humble yourself, put a little towel around your waist, scrub the poo and dirt off your friend's feet, then you'll be number one!" Of course, Paul was just following Yeshua, Messiah of Israel. He faced temptation in the wilderness, agonized over his future while suffering the garden, broke down in tears before he triumphantly walked into Jerusalem. The king of Israel did receive a crown. It wasn't the crown of the wall, though. It was a crown of thorns to further emphasize the torment that he endured on the cross.

The Crown of Messiah

The crown that interested Paul wasn't that same crown awarded to Roman generals, but the crown of Messiah—the reward from the crucified and risen Lord of the world. Somehow it's through suffering, our shame, our weaknesses, and seemingly failures that God makes visible the Son of God. Somehow it's through our weakness that we're able to show God's kingdom, that we're able to say, "It's not about my strength, and I'm going to keep walking." Why are you going to keep walking? You're a failure because He's successful. It's not about me.

Christian communities, fellowships, congregations subvert the Caesar of success when they recognize the Holy Spirit's power that we're talking about over results. Then they redefine success to include and embrace suffering when they actively pursue unity in the body of Messiah. Each of these can be summed up as a pursuit of faithfulness. See, believers are not called to be successful. They're called to be faithful. That's it. Faithful.

The Gospel Above All Else

Early believers focused on living out the law of love, the law and commandments of loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself, giving peace to all those. They strived to make their fellowships the center of life and love. They defended the truth of the gospel over against the various heresies of paganism and Gnosticism that were encountered in the 3rd and 4th centuries. Because the gospel is it. The gospel, and that's it. And I've said this last week, and I've said it the week before, and guess what? I'm going to say it again today.

The gospel's it. There's nothing more important than how God poured His love out into the world to establish His kingdom and restore the world back to Him and restore you back to Him. And it's fascinating because I see messages online, and I see other preachers and pastors, and Messianic and Hebrew communities especially—I'll say it—that tend to minimize the message and the power of the gospel so that they can talk about something else that they try to say is more important.

They minimize the message of Yeshua. Not just His death and resurrection. I mean, have you read the rest of the Gospels about what He did when He was alive? He was establishing the kingdom. But yet, that's no longer as important because, well, we have some Torah stuff that we want to learn now. Torah stuff is important. That's the reign of God. But that does not minimize the Gospel, the good news of what God has done.

The Narrative Arc of Scripture

I mean, you read the Tanakh, and whether the Bible ends in Malachi or Chronicles, it's a story that needs to be continued. I mean what's going to happen? What's going to happen to Israel? What's going to happen to the world? And the Gospels make an attempt to tie all that together in this grand conclusion of Yeshua is what's going to happen to the world.

I see topical teachings that have taken over as dogma in fellowships where speculation of scientific facts has somehow become important like God, the crucified Messiah, that we're going to argue and fight about. And somehow we're going to talk about if life exists on Mars or aliens or something, as if an alien came and established the kingdom of God and got crucified for you. I mean, what have we done with our pursuit of knowledge?

Furthermore, what have we done by laying down the shield that we're supposed to be using to defend the gospel of our Savior in the fellowships and with our peers and with the new believers coming in? And where are we in the fight? Are we on the front lines or are we on the other side?

The Primacy of Christ

There's nothing that's going to top the gospel. There's nothing that's going to save us from having a discussion about whether it's a six-day creation or whether there's a gap theory or whether the... Guys, I don't care. I really don't. I love [Genesis 1](#) through 3. It's a great testimony of the power of our God that sets Him in His place as not only the creator, but the sustainer, which is something even the pagan world didn't know.

How could a God sustain and give function to everything in creation? I mean, Egypt, Mesopotamia, they all had creation gods. They'd create junk. But no one gave purpose and management to all creation except for the God of Israel. That's what I see in the beginning of Genesis. We're going to fight about whether this is it. I don't care. The reason why we need to set up who God is is so we can recognize who His Son is. And why do we need to recognize who His Son is? So we can be reconciled back to Him. The details do not matter. They do not.

And we need to make sure that we're always guarding ourselves, guarding our families, guarding our fellowships, and defending the power of the gospel. Paul didn't run around preaching different shapes of planets or whatnot. He went around and said, "I preach Christ crucified." That's it. That's the message of God's love. Lest we be damned and forget that. Our job is to preserve the gospel message, hand it down to the next generation, and teach our children the ways of God.

Success Redefined: A Second-Century Testimony

I have a patristic writing, I guess. It was an anonymous letter written to Paul. A man, Diognetus—is that how you say his name? And it speaks about understanding what success looks like in the early believing world around the middle or late 2nd century. I think it was written somewhere between 130 A.D. and 170 A.D.

And here's what it says: "So who is this guy? I don't know, but it's a testimony. We're going to time travel back to the second century to get a glimpse of what believers were focusing on, and here's what it says:

"Christians do not find happiness by ruling over their neighbors, or by seeking supremacy over the weak, or by being rich, or by attacking the inferior. On the contrary, Christians see success in taking upon themselves the burdens of their neighbor, using their positions of superiority to benefit the deficient, and in distributing whatever they receive from God to the needy. This is what it means to be an imitator of God."

Man, that's powerful. Or, that's convicting.

Caesar, Money, and Mammon

If Caesar is success—right, we're using that metaphor—then money is definitely the army that he controls. That's the fuel of success, right? Money is the reason why we do everything in this country, in the States. Money is why we work, why we will pick up and move for a better job. Money is why we go to college, ironically, today, to get a degree that gets us a better job, so we can get better pay, so we can buy things, right? To give us some sense of fulfillment in our life.

In the U.S., we believe that we have the right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. And for the average American, the pursuit of happiness is the pursuit of money. It is what it is for most. It is what it is. You can get there with nothing and you can work really, really hard and then you can get a job and you can start your own business if you want to. And if you work really hard, then you'll be successful and you'll make money and then you can start more businesses and then you can have employees and then that's successful, right? Is that successful? I mean, that's pretty successful if you can run your own business, right? If you can make it from nothing to something. Not that that's not a bad thing, but what are your priorities in doing that? Are you doing it because you want to be successful? Because there's an extra step in that—what you do when you reach that point.

In the US, we've been taught these things and let's be honest, it's the pursuit of wealth. We even personify money with a borderline blasphemous title. You've heard it: the almighty dollar. That almighty dollar—singular, all-consuming, all-powerful. When in reality, we know there's one Almighty, the Almighty, the Almighty God of heaven and earth. Why do we attribute the Almighty dollar?

You Cannot Serve Two Masters

Yeshua said something striking to illustrate the dangerous combination of having passions towards the world's standards of success and money and having a passion, or at least entertaining the idea that you're in pursuit of God's kingdom. And he says this in [Matthew 6:24](#). And you're familiar with this verse: "No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth."

Now in this translation, it's translated as wealth, and in many translations it's just mammon. You cannot serve God and mammon. Anyone ever heard that verse with mammon? Mammon is the Aramaic word, so in the Greek word there it's actually taken—it's a pseudo-Greek word that's taken to portray an Aramaic word: mammon. And mammon meant wealth. Money and possessions. But not simply the objects. It was the pursuit of the objects. It was the goal fueled by greed and desire—I want more money, I want more things, I want that car with that TV, I want this, I want that, right? That's the pursuit. And Yeshua actually does something pretty interesting. He personifies that attitude towards wealth into an idol. He makes mammon a god here. You can't serve God and mammon. You can't serve the Lord of heaven and earth, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and mammon—like he actually personifies this, which I find striking, further emphasizing that it itself is an idol. You can't worship idols and worship God. See, we're incapable of enslaving ourselves to both.

A popular phrase today is, "Money is power." Anyone heard that? Money is power. Do you agree? Take into consideration what Yeshua said about man. It seems like Yeshua agreed. It's power, or at least it's a power. Perhaps one of those powers and principalities that attempts to take over the throne of your life that's supposed to be vacant for God.

Now, we know that money is not inherently evil. Everyone loves it when we say that, right?

Money is not inherently evil. We know a lot of the heroes of the Gospels were wealthy. The patriarchs were flat out rich. Abraham was a pretty wealthy guy. Yet all too often, we face the

persistent temptation to turn money into God—what we serve, what we hand over authority to and kneel down before, what we give our time and energy to, what we sacrifice our families to.

This is why Paul said the love of money is the root of all evil. [1 Timothy 6.10](#). The Bible warns us through many examples of how greed will always lead to destruction. Cain killed Abel because of greed and envy. Mammon. Achan had a lust for riches because he took just a little bit of gold, a little bit of stuff from the city. The entire battle of Ai was lost. Tons of Israelite soldiers were killed, and ultimately Achan and his entire family died a horrible execution. Why? Because he chose mammon. The desire of money and wealth can bring out the worst in people.

The Idolatry of Mammon

There's one day of the year where we idolize mammon. I'll say it like it is. It's the day after Thanksgiving—Black Friday. Anyone ever done Black Friday? You get the Thanksgiving paper and look at the catalog, look at the TVs on sale, the computers on sale, the games on sale. After you eat and spend time with your family, you spend all day figuring out where we're going to go tonight. Are we going to go to Macy's? Are we going to go to Target? Are we going to go to Walmart? Are we going to go to See's? Where are we going to go tonight?

In 2008, this night showed the true depravity of the flesh that we live in. A greeter at Walmart opened the door to allow the people to come in, and he was trampled and killed as people rushed in, stepping on him. Hundreds of people just stepping, a horde of sheep desiring one thing in life, neglecting love, neglecting their neighbor, neglecting Everything that a human being is supposed to have as a standard tossed in the trash. Stepping on this person, on their chest, on their face, on their neck, dying slowly with every footstep as hundreds of people stampeded him. And an onlooker that was there said it's fascinating because no one even tried to help him. They just rushed in the store. Rush, rush, rush, rush, rush, rush, rush, rush. Maybe even some of us have partaken in this type of unrestrained excitement.

The Wee Little Taxman

Zacchaeus, the guy in the New Testament—we know about him, right? They made a song about him. How'd it go? "Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little man was he, climbed up in a sycamore tree because he wanted to see." Yeah, this wee little man was a tax collector that ripped off his neighbors and pocketed the profit for his own gain. He was a chief publican, a chief tax collector. The people in his community who were starving to death and needed that money to feed their kids—Caesar needs it, and it's going to be this much. The reason he took

this much is so he could take a good chunk of it, because he wanted that new whirlpool in his backyard.

That family who was already maybe one or two months late for their mortgage payment—they just got enough money to catch up at least a little bit to the bank. No, Caesar, we need the taxes. It's tax time. Come on, hand it over. But we're going to lose the house. I don't care. Give it to me. Finally saved up enough money to have that medical procedure for your child? No, I need the taxes, all of it. And he'd take it and scoop out his commission into his lap and sit there looking at the success that he had made in his life.

This was the wee little man that we always tend to think of—this cuddly little guy we come and give a hug to, squeeze him. He was a jerk. He was a nasty little weasel. Until he encountered a man by the name of Yeshua.

One Encounter

One encounter. One encounter with Yeshua. Just one changed this man forever. Zacchaeus hosted Yeshua at his house and he said this. This disgusting man—I mean, the depravity of a human being right here. Taking money from his own people, from families, from the poor, so he could be richer. And here's what he says: "Half my possessions, Lord, I'll give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I'll pay them back four times as much."

Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because he too is a son of Abraham. He too represents the ethics of Abraham. He too now represents the covenant that God has with man. For the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost. He was lost. Now he's found. This guy's the seed of Abraham—he's good to go."

Oh man, all those people I defrauded—four times! Gosh, I was wrong. Half my possessions, everything—half. Now he was pretty rich. And I'm sure for some of us we read that, oh, well he still had a bunch of wealth left over. You are part of the top 7% richest people in the world right now living in this country. You want to give away half your possessions? It was a big deal. Half of everything—I'll give to the poor. Half of it.

Everyone out there took their money—I need to make restitution. I need to make four times as much. Incredible.

A Complete Turnaround

Talk about a 180 on the part of Zacchaeus. Once you experience Yeshua, your life is incapable of staying the same. It's incapable.

True repentance reaches even into the deepest, darkest places of your checkbook, it seems. True repentance cancels debt. True repentance transforms our vision. It reforms our desires. It changes our goals in life. True repentance modifies our dreams. It heals the hurt, and it heals the hurts of others. It's not a standard the world accepts.

Paul tells us that this person, this person who would take the money at the expense of others, this person who would live a life of get, get, get, rush, rush, rush—that person that desires things more than a true relationship with God. Paul puts it pretty bluntly. He's like, you just need to shoot him. You need to kill that man. You need to kill that person in your life.

Put to Death What Is Earthly

He says this in [Colossians 3:5](#). I overemphasize a little bit. Let's see here: "Put to death therefore whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed." And the scripture says something about greed. It actually gives us a footnote highlighting greed. This is idolatry. This is mammon.

Believers are called to be generous, not greedy. Why? Because our wealth and our lives are gifts from God. They're not yours. "But I work for it!" Funny. You're funny. How many of you have a job because God provided it for you? Raise your hand. That was a trick question. What makes you think the fruit of that seed belongs to you? You're a steward of it. As ambassadors, it's our job to remind the world of that fact—that all blessing comes from God, not our own pursuits. We're not the blessing givers. We bless others by allowing God to work through us. It doesn't originate from us. We don't own it. We don't sign our name to it.

Stewards of God's Gifts

The moment that we are granted salvation in the faith of God, our vision changes. We begin seeing ourselves as stewards—people who have been given the responsibility of handling God's property, God's money. I don't say money. The attitude is what prompted the attitude of the early believers in [Acts 2:44-45](#). Such a hard verse, because it starts talking about everyone being so excited about the salvation that God has brought and the impact of new creation and restoration coming upon them. And it says that they sold everything and gave it to the poor. Sold everything and gave it to the poor.

If you did that today, how many people in your community, your family—I mean, isn't that kind of foolish? They understood something differently in the first century. And it gave them the boldness and the encouragement to take that step and say, you know what? God loves me more than a bird, and I need to establish his kingdom further. Sell everything and give to others.

We're taught to work for money, and in the process we end up finding meaning only in the money instead of the work that we do. Is that true? Is your job meaningful to you? Or is the paycheck meaningful to you?

The True God of This Country

What the scriptures teach about money is very difficult. Money is the primary god of the country that we live in. This country was founded on God. It was founded on godly principles. It was founded on biblical principles. That was a long time ago, guys. A long time ago.

When speaking to the Ephesian elders or overseers, Paul says this in [Acts 20:35](#): "In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, Lord Yeshua, how He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Working to Give

So how many of you guys when we celebrate Christmas, you would always bring up, oh, it's always better to give than to receive? And so you'd always give one of your presents or you'd pack a little box to send out somewhere. And in reality, when we said that, maybe it was just me, it's better, it's more blessed to give a little bit than to receive a lot. Still got to receive something. I give something. I give a little bit. It's better and more blessed to give than to receive. Yeah, we're blessed to have a paycheck. Are you guys blessed to have a paycheck? Why? Because it's a blessing from God. It is truly a blessing. Thank God. As believers, we are to work at our jobs with all of our hearts, as if under the Lord, right? I mean, that's what we're supposed to be doing in our jobs. But the bigger blessing comes to those who give.

And this is where this message gets difficult. We all work 30, 40, 50, 60 hours a week. We all have jobs. We put a lot of time and effort into our jobs. When I worked at the hospital, I worked 40 hours a week, plus I was on call 24-7, and I never got to recoup the time. And so it was anywhere from 45 to 60 hours a week, just depending on what was going on. And we do this willingly to gain. To gain what? Paycheck. Paycheck. We want that paycheck. How many of us work 40 hours a week to give?

Do our spending habits reflect the fact that we recognize money is from God?

Success and Vision

I'm very blessed to know an individual in this fellowship, and he was talking to me. I would say he's very successful. But he was talking to me about the opportunity that he has to possibly go a different route in his career. And he wants to work really, really hard. And he wants to get all these certifications, licenses, and all this junk. And he was telling me about how much money he could make. He's pretty confident he can do it. And he thinks God is leading him in this direction, and he's going to make a lot of money. He feels. And he's like, I'm just taking this step of faith. But I truly believe God is opening these doors. And if I can do this, and I know that God has given me the skills to do this, I'm going to be making a lot of money. He's like, this much a month. I'm like, I mean, good for you, bro. You know what I mean? Like, what do you say to that?

And then the next thing he said shocked me. And he was so excited about it. He's just going on and on about how much money he's going to make. And he says, my family and I can live on the same means that we live on now. He's like, what I'm excited about is the fact that maybe God is doing this so that we can take out a big mortgage—a big, big mortgage—and build a building, a fellowship building that is designed to accommodate what our vision is. And it's going to have a kid's center. He wants a big playground. We're gonna have these classrooms in there for the kids to be interacting. We're gonna have a youth center and it's gonna be awesome. We're gonna have classrooms so that the men's and women's groups can come together throughout the week, and we're gonna have a prayer room and it's just gonna be awesome. And he's going on about this and he's like, with the money that I'm making, I can put that money towards the monthly mortgage and I'm so excited about that.

And I'm over here like... And he's like, I don't know if that's what God has in mind. That's what I want. That's maybe my flesh.

Laboring to Give

Wow. I know a person who works 50 hours a week to give. He says, yeah, I'd like to save up at least \$10,000 just to have it. Because we run into people who need money so often. People who have hardships. People who can't pay their bills, out of work, get injured. Or someone gets sick or there's a death in the family. I'd love just to be able to be like, bam. Give something that actually makes a difference instead of a couple hundred bucks. I'd like to be able to... Who are

you? You don't belong in this world. You are so subversive. You are like Red Dawn right now, subverting the occupiers.

And then I got convicted. Do I think that way often enough?

I have a quote here from Trevin Wax, who I think wrote Holy Subversion. And he states something awesome, and I love this, and I want you to pay attention and just remember this. The Apostle Paul claims that the reason we should labor is so that we may have something to share, according to [Ephesians 4.28](#). So we labor, we work, so we can share stuff. This cuts against both conservative political mindsets that see everyone individually fending for themselves and the liberal mindset that keeps entire groups of people dependent on government funds. Paul tells the non-worker to stop being a parasite to society and instead go get a job, then start helping others. But he tells the diligent worker, keep working so that you can receive the blessing that comes from giving.

I love that so much, guys, because neither one of the conservative or liberal political parties that we have in this country—guys, I hate to break it to you—they're corrupt. Both of them are corrupt. They're of the world. They're secular. I don't care what Fox News or CNN tells you, they are not proponents of evangelizing God's kingdom through politics. Hate to break it. I know I'm gonna upset a lot of people. But it's fascinating because this guy nails it. He's like, the conservative mindset is that we need to stop giving handouts. We need to stop giving social programs to people that may imprison them with the mentality that they don't get out and work. They need to get off their tush and they need to go work. Why? Because they need to be successful, because they need to pursue success in this country and be a good, outstanding citizen. And then on the other side, it's like, no, not everyone can do that. We need to have social programs to help people, and that may lock people into this. And this guy just comes in and he's like, Now, you know what the kingdom says? The kingdom says you need to get off your tush, you need to go to work, and then you need to give all that money away. Which side are you on? I don't know! Totally contrary to the world that we live in today.

Labor so that you can share. It's not a mentality that we like, guys, but it's one of the kingdom.

The Culture of Giving

Everyone wants to receive, but we're called to be givers in every single aspect of our life. You as an individual and the fellowship as a whole should always be seen as a giver. A giver. Always. That should be a goal. That's part of it. I see the attitude of giving so celebrated in the movement. That is until it's actually time to give.

I've been in the Messianic movement, whatever you want to call it—Torah movement, Hebrews, whatever—for 14 years now. Wow. That's a long time. And the one thing I picked up on, and I'm going to talk about this. I've talked about it before, and it's something that I'm passionate about because I have a son now. And the scriptures mean a lot more to me. I was holding my son when he was three or four years old, and the Father spoke to me as I was praying over him. I pray over him every night, bless him and everything. And the Father spoke to me and he said, you are responsible for raising him in the faith. And I had this overwhelming honor come upon my shoulders. I'm like, yes, Father.

And then I'll be honest, the voice hit me, but you're in this movement. You're in the Hebrews movement. And then I had a sense of despair, and I started to cry. Not that the movement's bad, but if you've been in any aspect of the movement, it's not necessarily—the movement that I grew up in is not one that I want to raise my son in. The fellowship that we're a part of now, that God has blessed us with, is something I'm honored to raise my son in. There's not many like it. Not many like it. And I began weeping and crying: What am I gonna do? Teach him my ways. Teach him the scriptures. Don't teach him strife. Don't teach him hatred. Do not teach him unforgiveness. Teach him wisdom. Teach him patience. And teach him the scriptures of the kingdom—that's not found in a movement or a church or a fellowship. That's found in the Word of God and that's found in the example of Yeshua.

And it's fascinating because when it comes to giving, when it comes to being a giver—which is a standard of a believer—I find that in the movement, or at least I have, this has been my exposure, that we somehow celebrate the idea of the destruction of the temple so that we can use it as an excuse never to fulfill the obligation and the expectation to be a giver. We love the excuse. We can't biblically tithe. Anyone ever heard that before? You can't biblically tithe. I've seen people at fellowships who think their fellowship was God-ordained. That God planted their fellowship. That God's going to do great things in their fellowship. That God has facilitated the coming together of families in their fellowship so that they could be a fellowship that represents the kingdom, that represents Yeshua, that upholds the standards of Torah to be the light unto the world.

God has planted our fellowship to do this. And they never gave anything to the fellowship because tithing can't be done biblically. Now, you don't have to call it a tithe to give to something that you think God is working in. But that's beside the point.

I asked one of the individuals, "Well, what are you going to do about the fellowship?" The fellowship, we kind of need funds to function—to put on events, to meet, to rent facilities. This church is fantastic. This church has been a blessing to us. They don't do it for free. Part of it is

that we need to accommodate the fellowship. How do you go out and do things as a fellowship? How do you accommodate the fellowship? How do you help people in the fellowship? How do you do anything? How's the fellowship going to survive?

If God wants it here, he will keep it running. That's what I was told a long time ago. That fellowship shut down and dissolved. God did provide. He provided blessings to fall on every single fellowship member that attended in the form of time, in the form of energy, and in the form of money. But only a few were bold enough to understand that this is God's provision for my community. To reciprocate it back, gotta provide. He'll keep it running. It's gone. We can't biblically tithe.

Biblical Feasts and Tithing

Can't do it. You cannot go to the temple and take your offerings during Shavuot and Sukkot and give your tithes, and that is a fact, Jack. Can't do it just like you can't keep any one of the biblical feasts. Someone forgot to tell them that. We can't approach the altar with a lamb on Passover. That's what the scripture says, right? Kill it. Roast it there in the temple real quick. Take it back to our home and eat it. That's what Pesach was about, right?

We can't do that. We can't keep Shavuot or Sukkot. And yet we still find a way to come together every single spring and read our Haggadahs. We blow our trumpets on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Teruah. And we pitch our tents in the woods for a week and claim we're keeping Sukkot, keeping the Feast of the Lord. Because that's important.

Teaching Our Children

I've said this before and I say it again. We have a commandment specifically given by God to teach our children the ways of the Father. [Deuteronomy 6](#) and [Deuteronomy 11](#) to start. I think [Leviticus 23](#) says that. We are to teach our children the ways of the Father. Not having a temple is not an excuse not to fulfill that commandment and pass on the wisdom and the ways of our God to our kids.

My son will see the Seder plate every single year. Can't wait till he starts asking the questions. It's going to be awesome, right? My son is going to toot that horn in the month of Tishri. My son will dance at Sukkot. He will dance in worship before the Father during the time of Sukkot. And he will see his mother and me put away the first—not the leftovers, the first of our income—to put back into the work that we know God is doing. And he will see me measure that amount by the biblical standard that was given in the Torah.

The Minimum Standard of Giving

People say, "Well, do you tithe?" Yes, I give to the best of my ability to what the scripture says. Minimum 10%. Minimum. Huge chunk of it. The ten goes to the fellowship and then I disperse more elsewhere. I want to be an example to my son. And I'm not going to use some ignorant excuse to try to keep from doing that and being lazy.

I can't go to the temple and give the first fruits of my crops. They didn't give money in the temple. They most certainly did give money. Torah actually allows it. You want to give crops? You want to get your cattle back? You've got to pay more than 10%. It's a very touchy issue. And it's not because it's a controversial issue because scripture says this about it or that about it. It's not because there's a Hebrew word that can be misinterpreted. It's because we're just lazy and we don't want to give up the passions that the world has pushed on us about what success is.

No Excuses, No Laziness

And I do say that without shame. If you allow an offense from a past church to keep you from taking on the vocation of the kingdom of God, you were never ready for the truth to begin with. Biblical giving is much more than just giving away what you could afford to give.

C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity*: I am afraid the only safe rule is to give more than we can spare. In other words, if our expenditure on comforts, luxuries, and amusements, etc., is up to the standard common among those with the same income as our own, we are probably giving away too little. If our charities do not at all pinch or hamper us, I should say that they are too small. They ought to be things we should like to do and cannot do because our charitable expenditure excludes them.

Guys, that's not something we like to hear. But that's what Paul spoke about. That's what Yeshua spoke about.

Orienting Our Lives Rightly

Proverbs 38:9 states: Remove far from me the falsehood of lying. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of God.

See, this is a prayer and it helps us avoid orienting our lives around money—like either how much we make or how little we make. Because after all, even a poor person can be obsessed

with materialistic things, right? Not about how much you have or don't have. It's about our perspective. It's about what we're looking at.

When we have our blessings from God, what is it that we intend on doing with them? Where do we see them going? Do we see them as further seeds that can be planted? Or do we see them as a non-perishable item we can store in the pantry?

The Parable of the Rich Fool

Luke 12:13. Yeshua has a story. Someone in the crowd said to him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But he said to him, "Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you?" And he said to them, "Take care and be on your guard against all covetousness. For one's life does not consist in abundance of his possessions." And he told them a parable saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentiful. And he thought to himself, 'What shall I do with all this rich? For I have nowhere to store my crops. I know what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build larger ones. And there I'll store all of my grain and my goods.'"

So the rich man in the story of Yeshua is called a what? A fool. Because despite all of the economic calculations, he did not consider his own mortality in his calculations of success. "I did it! I was successful!" Guys, you will die. You will die.

My Father's Legacy

My father was trapped in the rat race of standard career, just like we all are, until the age of 58, and he worked very, very hard to provide for our family. He wanted to be the provider, and he never wanted his kids or his wife to look at him and say, "You were never a good provider." And, thank God, no one can accuse him of that. He was always traveling, away from his family. Construction is hard. As a superintendent, you're always traveling. He worked at home for a little while to be with me in high school. He quit his job at the company that he loved so much—a great job—and took a pay cut to work from home for a company that he didn't like because he wanted to spend time with me as I went to high school. I'm so, so, so thankful for that.

The dream that he and my mom had was that when he retired, they were going to buy some land out in Montana or something. Who knows? And they were going to buy sheep. They were going to raise sheep and retire, raising some little stupid animals and running around the field. I don't know. That was their dream. They talked about it from when I was very, very small. And it'd always get Bratbuck up, joking. Oh, Bratbuck, this is what we're going to do. We're going to move. We're going to sell this house. We're going to do it.

The Dream Interrupted

My dad decided to retire a little bit early when he was 58. He was at home, and he was looking at how he could draw his retirement money because it was time. He worked long enough. It was time for him to at least take a step forward. Whether they get some sheep or whether they do something else, it was time for him to spend time with his wife that he had spent so much time away from all of his life working.

And I think for about three or four months, they spent every day together. Every morning he got to pray with her. Every morning they encouraged each other. And then he had a stroke. And they went in to operate on the stroke, and he never woke up from the surgery. And he died two days after they removed life support. And I got to hold his hand. He was so looking forward to standing on the front porch of that house looking over the pastures with those sheep, with my mother.

Look Back When You Die

You will die. What will you do before that?

Now the object here is not to fulfill some lifelong dream of getting some animals or something. The point is to be able, at the point when you die, to look back and not see a whole bunch of grain stored up in a big old barn as if you were going to live the rest of your days.

The Forest That Was Planted

No. The idea is to look out and see the forest that was planted by your seeding through God's empowerment. Would you dare be that person? Would you foolishly think that you're going to live forever?

Sociologist Lisa Keister did an article at Duke University, and she did some research showing that conservative Protestants save less and accumulate fewer assets than other Americans. She chalks up—and I'm reading the summary of this article—the lower wealth to religious beliefs. Keister found that conservative Protestants believe that people are managers of God's money and that the excess accumulation of wealth should be avoided. Furthermore, she discovered that these Christians have larger families at younger ages and that fewer of the women work outside the home. She says, and I quote, "Some people have just decided that saving money in my own bank account isn't what they want to do." Keister told a reporter, also noting that conservative Protestants are the most generous contributors to churches and charities.

As believers, we should astound the world around us with our generosity in whatever form we give it—in every form that we give it. It should be something that looks strange. We should be the biggest tippers at the restaurant. But they didn't do a good job. So? What's that got to do with it? But they don't deserve it. What do you deserve?

We should be the biggest contributors to the worthy charities in the city, in the town. We should be the first to volunteer our time, money, energy to the community, to the fellowship. There's a need here. We should fight over it. You should have seen the skirmish that went on in the meeting today when we were trying to figure out who was going to pray over the kids. I'm going to do it. It makes more sense for me. Fight.

When We Live Subversively

When we live subversively, we will attract attention—not only from sociologists, but also from our neighbors, from our family, from our friends. Our lives should be a testament of the world that Yeshua is king of, the world that Yeshua is lord of. That's what it means to be an emissary and ambassador. And I don't keep repeating that, but I want that to stick.

We need to show the world what matters. And it's fascinating because when Yeshua saw the poor woman giving her last two pennies at the temple—the widow's mites, right?

More Than the Richest

This is going to sound horrible because this goes against everything that we're taught to do in society. He didn't stop her, give her money back, and then give her a \$20 bill and say, "Here, you're going to take this." He didn't say, "No, don't give me that. That's your last one. No, here's 20 bucks. Here's 100 bucks. Here's 1,000. Go home." And he didn't. He applauded her generosity.

Society today would call him a jerk. Letting her give her money, that religious building right there, they should know better. It wasn't about that. It was about her boldness to dare and live out what she understood God was doing. It wasn't much, it wasn't much at all.

The world says what she gave was actually insignificant, but what she gave created shock waves in the kingdom. She gave more than the richest person did that day. It's not about the amount, it's not about the power behind it. It's about the will behind it.

I'm not wealthy, you're probably not either, but when we decide to subvert the standards of the world around us and say, "No, I stand for a kingdom that has a different set of standards," when

we decide to stand there in boldness and say, "I'm not going to do it the world's way anymore," we overthrow the entire kingdom.

When you have the opportunity to give, and you do, even if it's a dollar, it shines. It shines. When you give your time, it shines. Energy, time. When you give, it shines.

Fools in the Eyes of the World

In the parable of the rich man that Yeshua tells us about, he wanted to build barns and Yeshua calls him a fool because in the eyes of the world he was successful. Right? He had struck it rich. He made that investment. Whoop! Big crop. He is rich for the rest of his life. Now what's he going to do with all this money? All this grain?

But by putting the money on the throne of his life, he was foolish is what Yeshua says. In the eyes of the world, in the eyes of the worldly, believers will always be foolish. You will always look like fools by the way you act. People scratch their heads when they see us. Why are you spending your money like that? Why are you giving your money away like that? Why would you do that? Who's going to take care of your family? What about life insurance? What about the benefits of this job? What about your security?

What are you going to do? Anyone ever heard that before? Yeah, you're not alone. The world doesn't understand. When God has workers of a kingdom, he calls them to work a certain way, to do a certain thing, to go certain places, to fulfill certain missions. And it's something the world around us cannot comprehend. And if you're ever mocked for doing something that you know is a calling from God, it should be an encouragement, a great encouragement.

I have no more support now. I will depend on God. I have to now. That's a good thing. I would rather be a fool in the eyes of the world than a fool in the eyes of Yeshua. It's not an easy message to give, it's not an easy message to hear, but it can't be ignored because it's all over scripture.

Join the Resistance

Are you willing to join the resistance, the revolution that Yeshua started, to follow an upside down kingdom that according to the world is just a bunch of fools in a circus? Or are you committed to the kingdom of mammon that locks you into the standards of the world, that makes you second-guess being a giver in any form?

How many of you guys have given away those little homeless bags we made in the teen class? Awesome. Hand them out. Unexpected, right? Hand someone a bag? It's amazing.

You pass people on the side of the road begging for money. I know, we make the bags, and the bags are really cool, but it's fascinating because whether they're legitimately homeless or they're not homeless or maybe they're just a druggie or whatever, whatever thought goes through your head is really irrelevant. What's fascinating is the fact that you stopped, rolled down your window and gave them something because it showed that you're a giver. Even if you thought that they were illegitimately trying to beg for something, you're still a giver in some way, form or fashion.

And I love that because the world says that they just need to get off the street and the world keeps driving and you were probably the first person in 50 or 60 cars that rolled down their window and gave them a bottle of water and chips or something. You were a rebel. You were a revolutionary to the standards of the world by doing that.

All of You

Are we going to follow the kingdom of Yeshua or are we going to continue in the kingdom of mammon? Because we can't serve both. We're incapable of it.

Guys, this is part two of going through what it means to be subversive because of the empowerment of the gospel that we've been exposed to, because of the spirit that we've been given. These things are not hard with the empowerment of God. They're hard because the world around us says that you're wrong. The world around us says that real smart people don't work like that. Maybe I'm a fool for Christ. I don't know.

And every decision that you make and every opportunity where giving comes up. And when I say giving, guys, generosity is usually attributed to money, right? Money, money, money. But it's also your time and your energy. Those are the three main things that you can put into something or someone. You have to be generous in all of them to be a generous person.

It's not easy to write a check. Good gracious, it's just fascinating to watch how God can move in people and how the Zacchaeuses can become a son of Abraham once again. That's what we're called to walk after.

And so it takes a lot to give. It's not just money. It's your time and it's your energy. It's your prayers. It's all of you because you're supposed to reciprocate the same measure that Yeshua reciprocated to you, gave to you, right? And what did He give to you? Everything.

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