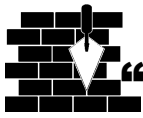


THE UNJUST STEWARD - “Are Dollars More Important Than Sense?”



“Building Blocks”

1. **(Introduction)** As you lead this chapter, it is vital to keep at the very forefront that the key issue “on the table” here is *not* money management, or even stewardship, but perspective. What do I *really* believe about the nature and purpose of wealth, and how do my current beliefs compare with Scripture?

(Introduction) A steward in the ANE was responsible for the management of the master’s resources. This including distributing what *was* the master’s to those who *were* the master’s. But, more importantly it meant doing what the master said to *do* with what belonged to him. Our modern understanding of “stewardship” is probably closer to the idea of a custodian, someone who takes good care of what belongs to someone else. “Private ownership,” as it is popularly understood, is not taught in the Bible. *Divine ownership* with delegated stewardship is closer to the biblical model.
2. **(Q1b)** It’s important to understand that this is *not* a parable about mismanagement in itself. It’s about mismanagement of resources that belong to someone else, which is what the Bible means by “stewardship.”

(Q1b) It is interesting that he doesn’t just get “fired,” but has to “give back,” “repay,” “deliver” a report of his accounting to the Master.

(Q1b) The Greek word for “manager” (ESV, NAS) is *oikonomia*, and it means “the management, oversight, administration of another’s property.” This word is also used by Paul repeatedly to describe his understanding of what his relationship with grace was (cf. 1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 1:10; 3:2)
3. **(Q5b)** It is a biblical principle that we pursue what we love (value) and become like what we pursue. In the words of Os Guinness, “What we revere, we resemble.” (cf. Jer. 2:5; 2 Kg. 17:15).
4. **(Q6-Matt 6)** The longer one “stores up” treasures on earth, and the larger that “storehouse” becomes, the harder it is to switch my allegiance/worship. It is therefore a good idea to develop a biblical view of wealth and possessions early in life rather than later. This has a direct application for parenting.
5. **(Q6-1Tim 6)** Paul contrasts contentment with a desire to be rich. He paints them as opposites. He is speaking here of a desire for more than I need. We typically counter his words by redefining our longings as “needs,” while simultaneously neglecting the genuine needs of our souls by redefining *them* as “longings” that not everyone has.
6. **(Q9-Mark 10)** We must continually remind ourselves that the issue here is surrender, not stewardship. Prov. 18:11 is very insightful here. The difficulty of the rich coming into the Kingdom is *not* merely an issue of wealth versus poverty. It is an issue of lordship: me or God. The tragic thing is that in truth, the decision is *really* between God and Mammon.
7. **(Q9-1Tim 6)** Paul describes the “desire to get rich” as more of a portal than an attitude. He presents it as a doorway of sorts, into a whole world of temptation and devastation. His language here is very, very graphic.
8. **(Q10-2 Cor 6)** The reason I can “enrich” others without wealth is because I have accepted the spiritual nature of true riches, and have concluded that I am wealthy.
9. **(Q10-2 Pet)** The not-so-obvious truth in this passage is that if I can not take *anything* material with me through the doorway from this life to the next, and I *know* that, then to focus on wealth and accumulating it is a clear statement that I am *not* living for eternity, but for this life only.



“Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Q3)** We need to remind ourselves that the steward didn’t get his job back, *and* of the original grounds for his dismissal. The steward has used his position in a very creative way. The master is admitting that. The steward created a situation where he was a “hero” to the master’s debtors, *and* where the master could not publicly chasten him for his “generosity” without tarnishing his own reputation.
2. **(Q4a)** This *not* a parable about financial management! It is one of a series told in the presence of the Pharisees, who were complaining about Jesus’ association with “sinners” (cf. 15:1-2).
3. **(Q5)** We seem to frequently lose sight of the fact that a “idol” is *not* merely a replacement for God; it *is* God! That means that even though we are the ones “choosing” it or “creating” it, it is still calling the shots in our lives.
4. **(Q9-Deut)** We need to exercise enormous care in how we interpret and apply the Old Testament passages about “blessing.” The OT notion of blessing cannot be separated from the covenant. And the covenant had *two* options: blessing or cursing. Both were conditional upon obedience. Modern Christians who “lift” the blessings passages out of the OT, without bring the entire covenant formula, are being irresponsible with Scripture.
5. **(Q9-Matt 13)** We need to keep in mind that this is a parable about the Gospel, *not* just Scripture in general (“the word”; cf. Luke 8 and Mark 4). A life characterized by pleasure and riches is a life that is accustomed to self-determination and independence. Becoming a “subject” in a Kingdom means no longer being “lord” of one’s own kingdom. Wealth is a struggle for those *inside* the Kingdom, but it typically is a *barrier* to those outside.
6. **(Q9-James 2)** We need to be careful here. This passage is *not* teaching that poverty *produces* “faith.” Poverty simply eliminates much of the competition *for* faith. God gives spiritual “riches” to all who truly ask; in short, the rich don’t.
7. **(Q10-Ps119)** We need to be *very* careful not to overlay our modern obsession with “knowledge” on thee verses. The love of God’s Word described here must be understood in terms of obedience; the psalmist delights in God’s Word *not* because it’s true or interesting, but because it shows him how *God* wants him to live as a child of the covenant. That’s the point in Psalm 119:14, “in the way of our testimonies I delight.” (The Hebrew word for “way” refers to a journey, direction, or one’s whole character).
8. **(Q10-Prov.)** Caution must be exercised in the reading of verse like this. The American emphasis on materialism often leads us to support the idea that you “can’t outgive God!” In other words, He’ll bless you with more material wealth if you give some away. Nothing could be more hostile to the larger truth of Scripture!
9. **(Q10-2 Cor. 9:10-13)** This is *not* a general passage about generosity. It is a specific teaching about Christians helping Christians and the glory God receives as a result.



“Going Deeper”

1. **Q4-vs 9)** Jesus says we should have a clear connection between this life and next, and that our use of money should reflect our belief in that connection. How does your current view and use of money show it?
2. **(Q6-Matt 22)** Jesus distilled the Law (probably the 10 commandments, here) down to two commandments. Which of the two are you more faithful to? Explain.

3. **(Q8-Luke 8)** The three women mentioned here were traveling with Jesus. How do you think *seeing* what He was doing *and* whom He was ministering to affect their decision to help him financially? Is your own financial “investment” in God work from a distance, or is it the result of close-up involvement, like these women? Explain.
4. **(Q9-Leviticus)** Do you think we don’t follow this teaching today for biblical reasons or cultural ones? What might it “look” like, if churches did this today?
5. **(Q9-Ecc 5:19)** What are the four things Solomon says are a gift from God? Which of the four are evident in your own life right now? Explain.
6. **(Q9-Luke 16)** Jesus seems to indicate that there exists a sort of “probationary” test before God will entrust me with eternal matters—true ministry of grace and Gospel. What is it?
7. **(Q9-Rev 3)** How is this verse an excellent explanation of Jesus’ description of wealth as “deceitful”?
8. **(Q12)** Do you think of “giving” as managing money “earmarked” for God, or an attitude of openness that extends to all your assets? Explain.