

Series: Becoming a Savvy Investor

VBC

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Luke 16:1-13

“Managing Resources: 4 Essentials to Being a Smart Investor”

Many of you have asked about our dog Spencer (okay, so maybe no one has)

- Spencer was really sick this week
- And I discovered that going to the vet isn't what it used to be
 - Has your dog had a colonoscopy?
 - Have you checked your dog's cholesterol lately?
- The costs aren't what they used to be either
 - Spencer has basically put us in chapter 11

Some of us may be close to that

- More than we would like to admit, we are in a financial mess
- If we reflect our culture anyway

A) WE HAVE NOT PLANNED WELL

- A significant majority are flying without a compass
 - Have no plan, have no idea what they will need to save to live well into retirement
 - By live well, I'm talking about preparing to live without becoming a significant burden on others
 - Living with the freedom to give ourselves completely to serving God

B) WE HAVE OVER CONSUMED

- More than most of us realize that people are in serious debt
- We have more things than any other generation before us
 - And the bills to prove it

Perhaps our greatest misjudgment

C) WE HAVE NOT CONSIDERED GOD'S WISDOM

- And the point is, God gives us a lot of wisdom
- Jesus spoke a lot about money
 - In fact, more than just about any other subject
 - One fifth of His teaching had to do with money
 - He said more about money than faith and prayer combined, twice as much in fact
 - More about wealth and possessions than heaven and hell

- Why so much?
 - When we get money messed up, a lot of other things get out of order
 - From our personal peace to marriage
- There's a clear connection between our spiritual lives and how we handle money

What we're going to attempt to answer in the next four weeks is this question:
 HOW CAN I BE A SAVVY INVESTOR?

- How can I be really, really smart when it comes to money?
- Not so that we can accumulate and spend on ourselves
- But so that we can that much more enabled to serve God

But first, we need to be convinced God wants us to be smart, clever, intelligent, savvy

- Whatever word you want to use, when it comes to resources
- And Jesus does convince us, with a story found in Luke 16:1-13
- In this story are two men, the first, a wealthy owner
- The other, a CFO of sorts, suddenly caught in an ENRON type scandal
 - Entrusted with payables as well as day to day operations - negotiating
 - Making contracts, and siphoning what he could for himself
 - Until he was caught
- Verse 2 tells us the owner asked for an audit
 - And suddenly, the steward faced larger realities
 - He had been living for today, but that was about to change
- Verses 3-4
 - Realizing his credentials would be gone, he would be damaged goods on the open market
 - And realizing he would not survive manual labor, he set in motion a plan while he still had some time
- Verses 5-7
 - With each customer, he began to curry favor
 - Those marketing olive oil owed corporate nearly \$150,000 in today's dollars
 - Those representing a grains cooperative, owed nearly half a million
 - In each case, the steward used his remaining moments to reduce debt
 - And while there have been numerous interpretations as to what he was doing...
 - a) Cutting out his commission, his part of the price
 - b) Or reducing the debt to increase favor with the owner and insure future dealings
 - c) Or being downright dishonest
- Regardless, by reducing the debt, he was looking ahead
 - Building future relationships, securing some long term residential hospitality

- And the owner was impressed (verse 8a)
- While losing trust in the steward, he could not help but admire his clever and resourceful action
 - His determination to prepare for the future
- It is here Jesus makes an application (verse 8b)
- The focus of His story is clearly at us
 - When it comes to shrewdness, when it comes to maximizing earnings, research, networking, street smarts, the world is often more adept
 - While those in God's kingdom seem to be more inept
- But wait... Is that so? There's a lot of evidence to confirm -
 - We naively dismiss life insurance because we are trusting in God
 - We bypass financial planners because Jesus is coming back
 - We listen to impassioned pleas, and throw our monies into ministries without asking, "but what is God really doing?"
 - We hear the truth the world does not have, of a future kingdom that promises to be our most worthy investment
 - And we invest 2-3%
 - We work for money, but we never stop to ask "How can we make it work for us?"
- Jesus was simply saying, "When it comes to using My resources, be really, really smart. Don't imitate his dishonesty, but emulate his savvy."

How do we do that in the world we live in today?

If I went to a financial planner, he/she might say:

- People who are smart with money look for things to invest in
- Not merely spend, nor save
- And as they invest, they are mindful of five basic principles...

1) THE PRINCIPLE OF EARLY ON THE S-CURVE

- Investing, like life, begins on the tail, which is often slow at first
- But investing increases momentum, and we climb the steep slope
- And while it is great to get to the top, it is here we can become complacent, succumb to a certain arrogance
 - Overlooking reality, things change, eventually the line curves, which is referred to as the slope of diminishing returns
 - And what were great investments soon are obsolete
- The key as an investor is this: you don't want to get in on the tail, too early before you know it is heading north
 - Nor too late, after it begins to slope
 - Keep looking for new s-curves

APPLICATION - It's a lot like that with life in general

- People inevitably slope, but the smart ones keep forming s-curves
- Churches that are smart keep creating s-curves
- And smart investors invest in that, rather than pour into something that has long since died

Here's what they might say next

2) THE PRINCIPLE OF COMPOUNDING

- A wise investor understands this, that some things compound
- You earn on an investment, which eventually leads to earning on the earnings of your investment
- Hence, the smartest thing people can do is invest early
- Realize time is the most important component
- You may say "this stuff applies to my parents"
- But notice, Jesus didn't say "Hey old people"
- In reality, this actually is more about you than them
- You might think, "But I don't have money to invest"
 - But if you have enough to go out 2-3 times a week for dinner
 - And buy occasional toys, you have enough to invest
- For it works something like this: if you want to save one million in 50 years, you would need to invest 18 dollars per month
- But if you wait 20 years, you would need to put 237 dollars in per month
 - To wait can be really costly!

Illustration - Heather and I

APPLICATION - the same principle applies spiritually

- Those who get serious with God early compound their earnings
- Jesus in effect said, here's \$1000 dollars today, or if you want to invest with Me, here's \$10 million tomorrow
- Paul used the principle of compounding to Timothy when he said, "And the things you heard me say, entrust to reliable men, who will be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2)
- Hence, wise Christians don't say, "I'll get serious about following God when I get older"

3) THE PRINCIPLE OF LEVERAGE

- Really smart people make use of other people's money (like my kids)
- No, this is different
 - A wise investor uses other people's money to increase the earning power of his/her own

Illustration - If I buy a home and use a bank's money, borrowing at 6%, and put a small amount down, so I can use other money to invest in that which earns 12%

- And my home is increasing in value by 15%
- I am leveraging my money, and increasing my portfolio in the process
- All because I am using someone else's money

Illustration - Smart people leverage all the time

- Seminary student loans
- Using someone else's money to increase future earning power

4) THE PRINCIPLE OF REPETITION

- Wise investors invest in that which will be ongoing
- So find the things that people will continue to need over and over again, and invest in that
 - People will keep drinking coffee, so maybe I should look at Starbucks, depending on where they are on the S-curve
 - But they may not keep going to Hollywood Video, tomorrow people may be getting their entertainment at home

Application - Eternity is always going to be there

- It will never go out of date, style
- In fact, it's the only thing that will not go out of date, style
- Hard to find a greater investment

How would Jesus answer the question "How can I be really smart with money?"

- Here in the story, He adds a fifth principle

5) THE PRINCIPLE OF RELATIONSHIPS

- It may be really smart to figure out how to earn money
- But smart investors do not earn money to accumulate
- They use their assets to invest in people
- If you are investing just to earn money (buy more toys, build bigger barns), you're settling for way too little
- Shrewd stewards take the fruit of leveraging, compounding, early on the s-curve, repetition and pour them into gaining relationships
 - The sort of relationships that will receive you into eternity
 - And who are these?
 - A) It may be those we invested in with the gospel, who will serve as a welcoming party

Illustration - India

- B) Those to whom we have taken our resources and invested in their spiritual maturity

- C) Those for whom we used resources to extend hospitality to in times of needed kindness
- D) Jesus may have answered this question with the next parable - Lazarus and the rich man
 - It may be the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized
 - Those God seems to especially identify with
 - Who may be there to welcome those who invested in them, but will not be able to welcome those who lived for themselves
 - The gulf is too great (verse 26)

Jesus closes this by telling us in effect "life is a test" (verses 10-12)

WHAT WE DO WITH THE SMALL THINGS INDICATES WHAT WE WILL DO WITH THE BIG

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- Am I investing in such a way heaven will have a welcoming party?