

How Do You Manage?

Part 1

Pastor Matt Engle
Faith Assembly of God, Orlando, FL
May 29, 2022
Used with Permission

Is anybody ready to dive into the Word of God? Amen.

We are starting a three-part series called, "How do you manage." It's about a topic that I'm very passionate about. I'm passionate about stewardship and finances and stuff like that. Do we have any Dave Ramsey course people in here? If you have taken Financial Peace University, you kind of get it. If you are in your car with your kids and hear him speaking, this is where you want to turn up the volume so they can hear the program. If your kids are like mine, they might say, "Not again Dad!"

I'm excited to be able to share some thoughts from the Word of God as we plan and prepare for a series we don't take lightly. I have a goal to really bring relevant messages to you.

We want to preach the Word of God, which by the way, aren't you glad that this is a church that preaches the full gospel from the Word of God? We want to see how to apply it to our life.

Do you know that the number one issue that couples fight about is money and finances? Americans lose 200 hours of sleep every year over debt issues. One in five Americans with a credit card have maxed it out in the last month. There is no condemnation on my part! One in four Americans with debt are in collections for at least one of their accounts. These stats don't distinguish themselves from Christians or the church, and everybody else. So that means that this is right down your lane. There are people here that are good with finances and do a good job. There are also others that are struggling, and I would just say, no matter where you fall, we're going to learn today and we're going to open up the Word of God and see what it says. Amen?

Just know that as we dive into what can honestly be a difficult subject to tackle, this is something where we don't want something from you, we want something for you! I'm gonna say that again, we don't want something from you, that's not our motivation behind why we would share something like this. It's because we want something for you. We want something for your family. We want you to be blessed. We want you to be living in victory. So, we're going to pray right now and ask the Lord's blessing upon this message.

Father, we thank you for the wisdom that we gain through the Word of God. I pray that you would open our eyes to see and our spiritual ears to hear everything that you have for us. God, we are open. We are ready to grow and to learn, so speak today. Anoint my words as they go forth. In Jesus' name I pray right now, and the church said, "Amen!"

Well, I thought as we talk about finances today, I would just give you a visual picture of what gains our attention. So much in life, we interact with this on a daily basis. Don't we? It's money. This is ten dollars. In the church, why would we preach on a subject like this? Like money and finances. It seems like that shouldn't be talked about in church, but do you realize that Jesus talked a lot about this right here. He talked a lot about money. In fact, there are over 850 scriptures that deal with how to manage this, how to give this, where our focus is, and all it has to do with money.

The bible talks more about money than it does about love. Now love is important! Somebody say, "Amen." But Jesus must have thought it was also important to talk about this subject and that's why we're going to talk about it today.

So, could anybody use ten dollars? It will get you a little gasoline but not a full tank. Who could use this right now? Come on up and get it. Here you go. Congratulations! Be sure to tithe on that money. Okay, I won't have the ushers follow you around, but tithing is a good thing. Now I was just wondering, what if I doubled that and not only did I give away ten dollars but twenty dollars? Could anybody use twenty dollars? Come on down and get it. It's amazing how money gets our attention, and unfortunately, some of you that haven't paid attention in church for a long time, suddenly your eyes are like this because I'm talking about money!

***** You need a kayak paddle for the next sermon illustration. *****

And there are some principles in the Word of God that I want to dive into today that are pretty incredible and I thought a good way to illustrate this would be to grab a paddle like this. Now let me ask this question. How many of you have been in a kayak before and you've used one of these?

If you've never been in a kayak before, it takes paddling on both sides of the kayak, to make progress. Maybe you've tried padding only on one side. What happens? You start to spin in circles.

A lot of us are operating in generosity. You understand the power of generosity and it is a wonderful thing. There is a counterpart to generosity that is very important. You can be very generous paddling on one side, but to keep being generous, you must manage money well, which is called stewardship.

***** Paddle on both sides of you to show generosity on one side and good stewardship on the other side are both needed to make your kayak go straight. *****

I think some of you may be very generous, but you haven't managed your money well. You have credit card debt, your bills aren't paid, and your kayak is going in circles. It's stressful and limits how generous you can be, because you haven't stewarded it well.

Now let me ask you this question, why would God continue to bless a generous person if they're not also stewarding the other side well? Or maybe you are limiting the full provision of God. I believe that some of you are very good stewards, you're a spreadsheet kind of person, and you love to manage money. How many of you in the room just love the spreadsheets and you show your spouse, but they're not interested? You know where every dollar and every dime goes. Maybe that excites and energizes you because you know exactly where it's going, but sometimes these people over here can also be called tight and they're not generous.

So that's why I say, you could be on one side of the pendulum or the other. You could be generous but not stewarding well. What are you doing? You're just spinning in circles. Or you could be stewarding well but you've yet to tap into generosity and you're still spinning in circles. I'm here to tell you that there's something powerful that happens when you can activate both in your life.

Maybe you're saying, God, I'm going to be a generous giver. I'm going to be a tither. I'm going to be doing all these things but I'm also going to steward the rest well and watch how that impacts your life. Somebody say "Amen" to that! All right, I'm done with the paddle.

***** Put away the kayak paddle *****

I'm going to read from Matthew chapter 6, starting in verse 19. And Jesus is the one that's talking here, but he says this, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal." He says don't do that but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroy and where thieves do not break in nor steal. Verse 21 is powerful. It says, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

If we're really going to operate in the full measure of provision when it comes to the things of God and God blessing us, then we must have generosity that is activated in our life.

Guys, have you gone into your garage and you're like, "How did I collect all this stuff?" Our focus can become on all these earthly things and if we take inventory of our life, we can sometimes realize that all our investment and all our treasure hasn't really been going to the kingdom of God, but it's just been going to stuff that we're not going to care about in about six months. It's going to go toward outfits or clothes that we're going to discard or not really care much about. That's why Jesus says in this passage that the

focus here is not on us or earthly things because they don't last, but the kingdom of God and other people is what the focus should be about.

There's a little bit of an internal conflict. There are a lot of things going on and I feel a little bit guilty when I say that I want to be blessed when I'm not all about other people. I feel like my bank account is going to get larger or I am going to get a nicer car or I am going to get a different house. Is that why I want to be blessed?

I want to go back and hopefully bring some context to that question. Let me read 1 Chronicles 4:10. Many of you have heard the prayer of Jabez. He prays this prayer and I want to read it to you.

Jabez called on the God of Israel saying, "Oh that you would bless me indeed. He's asking for the blessing of God. So, we can kind of decipher that it's okay to ask for God's blessing. "Enlarge my territory that your hand would be with me and that you would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain, but I want to be a blessing."

God granted him what he requested. Here we have an honorable man who is praying this bold prayer asking God to bless him. His motivation wasn't so that he could be blessed. His motivation was that he could be a blessing to other people. So, when we say, "Who wants to be blessed around here?", we're not asking if you want to be blessed to have a better car or a nicer house or more money in your account. We want to be blessed so that we can be a blessing to others.

Who wants to allow God to give you resources and funds so that He can channel it through you, so you can be a blessing to others? If you go way back into Genesis in the Old Testament, God says to Abram, "I will make you a great nation and bless you and make your name great."

We are blessed not just to enlarge ourselves, but we are blessed to channel that and be a blessing to somebody else. In life, there are so many people that we meet where there is a very real need.

As I describe this, I want you to think about maybe, there are hurting people or people that have financial needs, there are missionaries that we're challenging everybody to support because they need to be sent. There are needs for widows and orphans, and we're commanded by scripture to take care of them. People live in developing countries that don't have a great economy like we do and struggle. There are needs that represent people who have experienced injuries in their life or sicknesses that have caused them limitations and the list could go on and on.

Over here, we have provision and resources. It dawned on me that over here, we see needs that I could go on and on about. What hit me is, in between the needs and all of the resources, we are in between all the support that people need and all the giving that

we should be doing. We are the people in the middle. It is you. You are right in the middle, and you can make a difference. You can say, "God, I realize that you've blessed me", and the cool thing about giving is not that all giving must be equal as far as the amount, but the sacrifice can be the same.

So over here in the resource pool, you could say, "God, I can't do everything, but I can do something. So, I'm going to give, and you start channeling all those resources over to those that are in need." And God will bless you. I like to think of it like this, you're not to be a reservoir. When water flows in but never flows out, it is like a stagnant body of water that just pools up and sits there. But there's not much life to that.

Wouldn't you like to be a river that says, "I'm going to be the channel for God's resources all the way over here to needs all the way over there." And we watch how God continues to pour out more and more for us to be like rivers and not reservoirs. God says, "Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven."

Generosity changes things. God makes provision using people just like you to be generous. I don't know if you've heard of the ministry of Convoy of Hope. Where there is disaster, they go where people are hurting to provide humanitarian aid. Maybe they serve in a war-torn area or where a tornado has done significant damage. They are like "first responders" with food and water, flashlights, generators, and medical aid to help people back on their feet. Convoy of Hope goes into large cities and lower income areas to set up teams to give away groceries.

When the founder of Convoy of Hope, Hal Donaldson, was a child, his dad was killed by a drunk driver. This man's dad was the main breadwinner in their family and his family experienced incredible hardships because of the loss of his dad and his mom being seriously injured in this accident.

A family named the Davis' temporarily took them in as they had nowhere else to go. The Davis family didn't have much and lived in a mobile home, but they gave them food and took them to school and picked them up to help them get back on their feet.

Finally, his mom moved their family into a little apartment. He says it wasn't uncommon to come home and see a bag of groceries that somebody left on his front doorstep. "Do you realize the impact that makes on a young kid when they have nothing and then there's this blessing, as if dropped off from an angel?"

Hal Donaldson went on to pursue a career in journalism. When he was on his third trip to India in Calcutta, he met Mother Teresa face-to-face. He approached her and she asked him a question that he wasn't prepared for. She said, young man, what are you doing to help the poor and the suffering?" He decides not to lie to Mother Teresa in his answer. He said, "Well, to be honest with you, I'm not doing much of anything." And she said these words, "Young man, everyone can do something." So, he walked away and

was embarrassed of his answer. Then he remembered that he was impacted by generosity in his own life.

On the flight home all the way back to the USA, this conversation kept replaying over and over in his mind. As soon as he got back home, he determined that he's going to be part of the solution. So, Convoy of Hope was born. He drove his pickup truck to the grocery store and bought about a hundred dollars worth of groceries and loaded them up in the back of his personal pickup truck and went around to the neighborhoods and the families that were in need. He just said, "God bless you," and began to hand food until it was all gone. That was 25 years ago. And now, Convoy of Hope has provided more than one billion dollars of food and assistance to over 115 million people, simply because somebody understood the power of generosity.

Secondly, if you're going to move forward in the full measure of God's provision and blessing, you must have a stewardship mindset. This is the second side of the paddle we talked about. God has put you in charge of his resources. I want to say this carefully again, "God has put you in charge of His resources and He's saying, "Don't store it for yourselves, but store up treasures in Heaven." In other words, he's given us the opportunity to manage what is His and He's saying, "It's your choice, it's your obligation, it's up to you to be a good steward." I like what Pastor Robert Morris says, "Good stewardship gives you the financial margin to be generous and give to others."

I'm sure you would say, "I want to be the person who knows what it's like to open up their hand and give to someone in need." The problem is that you also are saying, "I've mismanaged finances and handcuffed myself into a corner." I'm telling you, if you get a hold of this, it will change your life with both sides of the paddle moving together, stewardship and generosity.

I'm going to quickly review four principles of stewardship.

The first principle is the principle of ownership.

I will say this statement sounds a little bit harsh, but it's really good. In fact, I'm going to cue you to say "amen" after I say it, just in case you're a little bit offended. Okay, here we go. "God owns everything you own nothing." Amen? "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it, the world and all who live in it." Psalm 24:1 "For every animal of the forest is mine the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains and the insects in the fields. They're mine. If I were hungry, I wouldn't even tell you, for the world is mine and all that is in it." Psalm 50:10-12.

It's an incredible, incredible thing today when you get in your car and you touch that steering wheel and you can say, "This car is in my possession, but I don't own it."

Or when you log into your bank account or if you're old school you go to the bank and you say, "I see the figures here. I see the numbers here. It's kind of in my account but I don't own it." You pull into your driveway and look at your house or your apartment and recognize that God has blessed you, but you are fully aware that you don't own it. It all belongs to God. He's the owner and we have to be willing to be good stewards.

Here's the second principle of stewardship: the principle of responsibility.

God entrusts us with everything that we have in the same way that He supernaturally blesses you when you give.

You know how there's a supernatural component that's in play when God opens the windows of heaven to bless you when you give? Many of you know exactly what I'm talking about. In the same way, when you live your life according to biblical stewardship, you can see that same blessing opens up over your life. It's a powerful thing.

The third principle of stewardship is the principle of the first.

When we put God first in our finances, and I know some of you haven't done that yet, honoring the Lord first with your tithe, which is 10% of your income. I want to challenge you to see how God blesses you not just so you can be blessed, but so you can bless other people.

The tithe is a big deal. We want to teach our kids to honor God first. If we give them an allowance, we want to instill honoring God with their money when they are young. When we give them a dollar, we encourage them to put a dime in the offering for every dollar they receive. If their tithe is only 35 cents because their allowance is \$3.50, don't discourage them from giving it. I believe that the tithe is holy. I believe that it's important. The scripture that runs through my mind, "If you're faithful with a little bit, God will give you more to manage." I don't care if it's ten cents or ten million dollars. The tithe is holy. We have to be people who are willing and ready to say, "God, I put you first in this area." It's about the Biblical principle, not just the amount. Wherever you are, whether you say, "I don't make very much or I make a lot," be a tither. And the church said, "Amen!"

The fourth principle of stewardship is the principle of reward.

I love the parable of the talents. The Bible says we're all going to have to give an account as stewards of how we've managed. Matthew 25:23 says, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful with a few things. I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness."

I don't know about you, but when I stand before God, when I stand face-to-face with Jesus, I long to hear those words, "Well done, good and faithful servant." The way you

manage your time, your resources, your energy and how you did your job, don't you want to make our Heavenly Father proud and happy? You know what I'm saying? We're all going to get called to give an account of what we've done with our lives. Would you close your eyes right now?

Maybe you are saying, "If God were to pull me aside right now, or if God were to call me home, I can't say that if I stood before Jesus that my life is even right with him." You know that sin separates us from God's best. Sin separates us from what God wants for us, which is forgiveness, freedom and victory.

Listen, Jesus wants to forgive you. He doesn't long to condemn you, but he wants to set you free. Before we even talk about stewardship of our finances, many of you here may have some things on your heart that need to be dealt with. Maybe it's an attitude of rebellion or disobedience. Perhaps there is some sin that I haven't even mentioned, but you sense the spirit of God speaking to you right where you are. And you know that it's time today, to give it all up to Jesus and say, "Jesus, cleanse me, forgive me of all my sin. I'm telling you that when you invite him into your heart, He will cleanse you. He will set you free and put you on a new path. That's what he wants for you. So, before we leave from our time together, if you know you need to get right with God, now is the time.

Before you leave, I want to challenge you in one more area. Some of you have been really convicted in this area of generosity because you've been a good steward, but you've been holding on so tight. God is speaking to some of you to loosen the grip and learn the joy of giving, learn the joy of generosity in your life, and watch how God changes you.

Some of you have that generosity already flowing through you, but you've not been a good manager. Allow God to do something right now with the practical things in your life. It's got to start in your heart. It's got to be a deep conviction that you are going to do this thing right, or maybe you're here and you just have a financial struggle and finances are a hardship for you right now. This is the time to let God into this part of your heart.

I want to pray for you to have both sides of that paddle in the water moving forward.

God, bless your people as they are both generous and good stewards. In Jesus name, Amen.