

Series: Makin' It Rain	Reference: Various Passages	Title: Bold \$ Unapologetic	Date: 05.05.2019
<p style="text-align: center;">Website Writeup:</p> <p><i>What is really mine? Scripture speaks of us moving from being slaves to sin to slaves of righteousness. Becoming Bondservants of Jesus, who manage, steward & oversee the Master's resources. Do we view ourselves, and all our resources in this light?</i></p>			

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Romans 15:13 says, *May the God of hope fill you with all joy & peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Overflow; a natural process of being filled. The Holy Spirit filling me - family & friends - local community - the world. Not forced or awkward. What you're filled with overflows to others. Filled with Jesus. The Word of God. The Spirit of God. Purified. Made holy. Scripture throughout teaches, we're blessed to be a blessing. We give God in proportion to what He's given us - Jesus gave his life, I lay mine down in like response.

Which brings us to the question of ownership. Who owns me? My stuff? Talents? Abilities? Car? House? Money? Kids? My life?

Scripture teaches, all we are & have belong to God. In Leviticus 25:55 it says this about the people of God, *55 for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.*

In Revelation 5:9–10, in speaking about the work & person of Jesus it says, *“You are worthy to take the scroll & to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe & language & people & nation. 10 You have made them to be a kingdom & priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”*

In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 it teaches, *You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price.*

In Romans 6:18 it speaks of our allegiance... *18 You have been set free from sin & have become slaves to righteousness.* A mirror image of Pharaoh & Israel's slavery in Egypt. God rescued Israel out of Egypt & their status as slaves transferred to God. We are God's possession.

In the language of the 1st century Greco-Roman world, a slave was considered a “living tool” of the master - “property.”¹ When the original readers came across slavery

¹ Biblical Studies Press. (2006). *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Phm 16). Biblical Studies Press.

language, there was no mistaking what it meant. Whatever you yield to becomes your master.²

They would've understood the word 'slave' as 'bond-servant'; a person who willingly submitted themselves as slave of another. Maybe they were working off debt, or came from a line of bondservants. We mustn't confuse this idea of bondservant with slavery in American history - they're not the same. Slavery in America was a wicked & oppressive system. A bondservant in this context willingly submitted to the master, and enjoyed many benefits of the master's household. Bondservants were often treated very well, and in certain cases, enjoyed elevated status in society; an ancient system of welfare.

A fitting illustration. Before Christ, I willingly submitted myself to sin. But sin is a tyrannical master never delivering what it promises. I transfer my allegiance to Jesus, a Master who willingly gave his life to buy my freedom, which drives me to willingly give him mine. Jesus isn't tyrannical. He brings freedom from bondage. That's why Paul writes to the Galatians in 5:1, *'It's for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.'* Sin as master, depletes. Jesus as Master, builds up.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, 'When Christ calls a man, he bids him come & die.' Death to self - Alive to God in Christ Jesus. In Jesus, we're a new creation, the old has gone the new has come. We've passed from death in sin, to life in Christ. We've shifted allegiance - we have a new master.

According to Scripture, we're the willing bondservants of Jesus. And in that bondservant/master relationship, we must acknowledge, the master owns everything. The bondservant enjoys the benefits of the master's belongings & financial covering. The bondservant is entrusted with certain items & monies to steward/oversee - but the master ultimately owns everything. The servant stewards what is the masters, as reflected in the story of Adam & Eve from the beginning.

Therefore, in speaking of filling & overflow, it brings us to an important subject. One which is brought up more than any other in Scripture. The spiritual nature of Money.

It's been said that fools rush in where wise men fear to tread. In this matter though, fear is unfounded. We need to talk about money openly & unapologetically. Boldly. In full trust & assurance that Six:Eight isn't in the business of misusing finances. Fear has gestated in the stories of those few who've misused the kingdom of God for personal gain. Like good Priests in the Catholic Church whose commission has been clouded by a number of unscrupulous men - the church sometimes resides under a cloud of suspicion in the area of money given a handful of dishonest televangelists.

As bondservants of Christ, our finances overflow to serve the King. We're not televangelists looking to scam anyone into giving their life inheritance so we can fly

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Ro 6:16–20). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

around in private jets & build personal empires. We speak the inclusive language of family - WE. Local church is a family of faith sharing resources for kingdom purposes. If you your hackles raise at mention of money, I ask you gain self-control over the emotion for the next few moments. Set it aside. Listen. Because we can have a very candid conversation couched in trust & marked with purpose. We'll find we have great opportunity to participate in the kingdom of God through our desire to overflow financially.

John Wimber, one of the original founders of the Vineyard, once wrote, "Twelve of Jesus' thirty-eight parables had to do with money, as did 1/6th of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark & Luke. It's now clear to me, pastors have a responsibility to preach & teach about money, for Christians can't grow to maturity until their hearts & minds are conformed to Scripture on their use of money."³ Money's the one subject which comes up in Scripture more often than any other. An important topic with far reaching implications on our spiritual formation.

Billy Graham once said, "If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life."

Money promises everything it can't deliver. It can't save, or give purpose, or happiness (I didn't say it can't help). Jesus urged us to have a proper outlook on money in Mt 6:19–21. ¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths & vermin destroy, and where thieves break in & steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths & vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in & steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where's your heart? What does it serve? What's your treasure? Because, overflow originates from the heart. What's in my heart overflows from within me. So, it's a question of ownership. What fills me is the same question of what owns me. Because Jesus said in reference to money in Mt 6:24, ²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one & love the other, or you will be devoted to the one & despise the other. You cannot serve both God & money. People either consumed with the love of money, or consumed with the love of God.

Money isn't bad in & of itself. It's a spiritual matter. A tool of the kingdom which mustn't be allowed to become king itself. A spiritual tool in the hand of the steward, the bondservant, for the sake of the Master's bidding. I can't tell you what to do with your money, only how to regard money in light of Jesus. We speak of ownership to view money & wealth for what it truly is, which leads to wise choices with the resources God has entrusted to us. When we're filled with Jesus, generosity naturally overflows from us. Our material & financial resources as overflow of gratitude towards Jesus to see the kingdom advanced among the nations.

³ <http://www.vineyardchurchplanting.com/2013/09/04/every-pastor-needs-tell-congregation-money/>

Martin Luther said, 'Every Christian needs two conversions. One for the soul & the other for his pocketbook.' True. It's a constant ongoing awakening for us that we're in relationship with God. In our early walk of faith, we may look at this relationship simplistically & compartmentalize. Jesus saved me - in a box over here. Now, I live my life on my own terms until He comes back - in a box over there. We may not regard our relationship with Jesus to have any bearing on finances, sexual purity, where we live, career choices, etc. Yet, as spiritual maturity sets in, we realize, God owns all of me - everything I am, do & own. Mature Christians willingly & gladly offer it all up to him as a living sacrifice.

As it says in 2 Corinthians 9:7, *7 Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.* That's not just a verse used by unscrupulous religious leaders to bilk the masses of money. Rather it's a spiritual reality that we freely & cheerfully give to God what's already His in gratitude of what He's already done for & entrusted to us!

The longer we walk with Jesus, the more we learn, *verses like Luke 14:33 come into focus, 33 In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.* There's no in-between in the kingdom of God - either a slave to sin, or a slave to righteousness. Filled with Jesus - I'm 'all in', including my finances, sexuality, career & calling, the way I speak & think, etc.

There are some very sober warnings about money in Scripture, like 1 Ti 6:9–10. *9 Those who want to get rich fall into temptation & a trap & into many foolish & harmful desires that plunge people into ruin & destruction. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith & pierced themselves with many griefs.*

Sobering commands as well, 1 Ti 6:17, *17 Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.* Notice that last phrase, 'for our enjoyment'!

Some of this may be difficult to hear. We strive to address the heart in preaching in order to change the way we think - some teaching may fly in the face of how we've been brought up. We need to conform our thoughts on money to Scripture. To understand, we're bondservants of Christ. God owns everything, no compartmentalization. No 'Half-in/Half-out'. God doesn't own a tenth of my finances - it's all His. He's graciously letting us use & enjoy it.

Jesus teaches this in Matthew 25, the parable of the talents. Servants are given the Masters money to steward while he's away. A parable clearly teaching, we steward God's resources now - therefore, the idea we possess anything, is a deception. The question is, do we invest what's been entrusted us to benefit God, or do we squander it, or merely sit on it waiting for his return?

John Wesley said, 'Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.' Great advice. We shouldn't be ashamed of proper ambition to make a good living for our families. Scripture pushes us in this way. It pushes in the way of diligence, hard work & integrity in the issue of accruing wealth. There are no get rich schemes in Scripture. I remember a friend calling me in Indonesia once asking, "Hey, I just got this email from a guy in Africa. He says if I give him my bank account number he will transfer a million dollars over to me & I can keep a percentage..." You know the scam. Scripture warns us, if it looks too good to be true, it probably is. Very few win the lottery in life & those who do are often ruined by it - the way to secure wealth is through diligence, honesty, integrity & hard work (Prov 14:23/28:19/Jer 17:11).

Scripture also urges us to save as well. Proverbs 13:22 says, *"A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children."* Proverbs 6:6 says, *"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways & be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer & gathers its food at harvest."* And 21:20, *"In the house of the wise are stores of choice food & oil, but a foolish man devours all he has."* Sometimes life doesn't afford us the opportunity to save enough for future & family, being at the whim of volatile economies & governments. However, we're urged to plan wisely & save as best we can.

However, Jesus also urges us to guard against hoarding. In Luke 12:15 he says, *"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."* He proceeds to tell the story of a man who's hoarding wealth, but dies in the midst of obsession. Jesus ends by saying (12:21), ²¹ *"This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."*

Scripture also urges us to give all we can. John Wimber wrote it this way, "So where does God tell us first to invest his money? In the kingdom of God, in tithes & alms (sacrifices beyond tithes). Formerly I taught that a tithe was not necessarily 10 percent. But now I'm convinced from Scripture that it *is at least* that, and that it should be given to the local church. Christians need to understand, from the Bible, their responsibility to give generously to God's work."

I agree. God's people have always been instructed to give at the least a tenth of their income as we see in Le 27:30, ³⁰ *"A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord. That tithe, or a tenth, went to the support of the Temple, the priesthood, care for people & overall work of the kingdom. In Mt 23:23 Jesus rebuked the leaders for neglecting other things but only keeping up with the tithe, ²³ "Woe to you, teachers of the law & Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill & cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy & faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. Notice he states they were not to neglect tithing, but should be overflowing the life of God in all ways.*

The local church is the avenue by which God's bringing the message of salvation to the world. Tithing's a spiritual issue practically tied to the ability of the local church to do so.

John Wimber went as far to say that we give that tenth to the local church before anything else, and anything outside that is considered alms. I agree.

When we first started Six:Eight, and hadn't yet started passing the tithe box. A guy came up to me & said, "Man it's great you don't ask for money, that's really cool." He thought churches only cared about money & were always asking. That it was nice a church lived by faith & didn't ask. I proceeded to tell him, the only reason we hadn't passed the tithe box was, I hadn't yet opened a bank account. I simply didn't want to be sitting on a bunch of cash. I'm not making fun of the guy, but it was naive. Churches are organizations with bills to pay, operate financially, expend resources on their communities, in areas of poverty & mission, have salaries & people for which to care. Comments such as his, come from younger people who've never had the financial responsibility of running an organization.

We have no fear in approaching the conversation of money. God calls us to speak unapologetically on the issue as Jesus did. At Six:Eight we never want our ministry to be limited by a lack of funding. In our history we've paid our rent, salaries, bought equipment, paid other necessary bills, helped out local families both inside & outside Six:Eight who've struggled. We've invested in local community partnerships deepening relationships. We've supported the Halls & Sammy Zondervan in their endeavor to mobilize people to the least reached people groups of the earth for the Gospel. We continually support the work in Lebanon & Syria providing income for evangelists & church planters to further the Gospel among Muslim refugees. We've invested money in this building, and others we've met in, as a thank you to them to show care, love & appreciation of our neighbors. We've trained leadership & refreshed them with meals & gifts. We've put on community parties & luncheons which have increased relationships & opened doors. We've welcomed our newcomers with meals & fun events. We've developed & implemented retreats & seen lives change as a result - we want to keep doing these things & more. And we are in process of revamping our lease to include the 1st floor of this building to accommodate our growing church & its children's ministry!

We want to have a visible physical footprint on the Eastern Main Line. We need to be wise to save for the future & build reserves for the rainy day when we need to rent, renovate, or buy a larger place. To develop people, share the Gospel, and care for those in need.

We seek good council from other churches, the Vineyard USA & educated voices in these areas. Kim & I have sat with Bubba Justice of Vineyard USA & gained his wise counsel. I've attended church growth conferences, and am on weekly phone calls which specifically address the challenges of a growing church such as ours. We're moving ahead!

The challenge is to think hard about ownership. Consider your heart and if it joyfully overflows in order to glorify God in all ways? Growing as a good steward of what he has entrusted to you?