

# Priorities 02 Eph 4

by William MacDonald

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*William MacDonald emphasizes the importance of prioritizing God in all aspects of life, including work and personal fulfillment.*

**Duration:** 1:08:13

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:14

**Topics:** "Priorities"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher reflects on the tragedy of a man's funeral where only sixteen people attended and the service lasted only eight minutes. The preacher emphasizes that despite acquiring material possessions in life, we ultimately leave this world empty-handed. The sermon highlights the importance of prioritizing the needs of others over personal greed, using the example of a man who hired unemployed workers and paid them fairly. The preacher also references a story from the Bible about a man who becomes obsessed with acquiring more land, cautioning against the dangers of always wanting more. Ultimately, the sermon encourages listeners to recognize the true value of life and to not be consumed by the pursuit of power, fame, or riches.

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## Transcript

We ask ourselves about the priority of prayer. Am I a man of prayer? Do I see God working in my life in supernatural ways, or is it just something I read about in books? We talked about worship, how our real reason for being here is to be a worshiper of the Lamb of God. Am I a worshiper? We talked about our family.

What is the priority of our family, and how do we get all of these things in their proper perspective? We talked about the assembly. Am I an assembly-oriented man? Does it have its proper place in my life? This morning I'd like to speak about our secular occupation, and just perhaps make a few comments on this and see if we can bring this subject into focus, because it is a problem. So many hours of the day are devoted to what we call our secular employment.

What place should it have in our lives? Now, first of all, the first comment I'd like to make, and we all know it, is that as far as the word of God is concerned, there really is no distinction between the secular and the sacred. And I think the key passage is Ephesians chapter 6, and beginning with verse 5, having to do with employees and employers, and I'm certainly glad that these verses are in the word of God. Ephesians chapter 6, verse 5, servants, and the word really is bond slave, the obedience to them that are your

masters according to the flesh with fear and trembling in singleness of your heart as unto Christ.

Notice that, as unto Christ. Not with eye service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free. Now, here's a paragraph of scripture dealing with slaves, and these slaves are carrying on the most menial, debasing type of work, I suppose, that you could think of.

And the Bible says it's honorable work, and it can be done to the glory of Christ. That's wonderful, isn't it? You mean a man can be out in the field picking cotton, bearing the burden and heat of the day and be glorifying Christ? Yes, that's exactly what it says. And to me, that's one of the glories of the Christian faith, that it can take something like the common routine, the daily round of work, and exalt it for the Lord Jesus.

I'm sure you notice how those expressions are repeated. Verse five, as unto Christ. Verse six, as the servants of Christ.

Verse seven, doing service as to the Lord. Wonderful, isn't it? No difference between the secular and the sacred. The second observation I would make is that work is God's will for the human race.

Work is God's will for the human race, and every type of honorable work can be done for the glory of Christ. But then to bring the thing into balance, too, I think we can say this, and I say this particularly for some of our younger brothers who often feel reckless in work, no job is perfect, no job is ideal, and all work has its frustrations. Do you find that, or is it just myself? Sometimes when we're younger, we're very idealistic, and we're always looking for the perfect job.

Well, every job has its drawbacks, and I think we'll see in a moment why that is so. One purpose of our employment is to provide for the needs, for our own personal needs and the needs of our family. And you remember how Paul brings that out in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verses 7 through 11, where people were getting restless in their daily work, looking for the Lord's return.

Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 3, for we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own bread. Ye brethren, be not weary in well-doing.

If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him that he may be a she. Yet count him not an enemy, but admonish him as a brother. And so the purpose of that daily work is to provide for our own needs and the needs of our family, but there's more to it than that.

Also to provide for the needs of others, and this is distinctly Christian in its character. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 28 says, but him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to any man that hath need. It's really a remarkable verse when you think of it.

It reminds us that some people before they're saved are thieves, and that apparently was the case there in Ephesus in the local churches. Paul says, but him that stole, steal no more. Well, there's a lot of religions in the world say that, you know, don't steal, it's wrong to steal.

But only Christianity goes and gives the positive side of it, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give. As far as I know, the Christian faith is the only faith that

can take a thief and make a philanthropist out of him. That's what you have in that verse, and this is one of the great joys of the Christian life and one of the great joys of discipleship, to be a steward for the Lord Jesus Christ and to take the things that he entrusts to us through our occupations and in other ways and use them to alleviate human need.

And incidentally, there are wonderful opportunities around us all the time investing for God, and there's no investment in all the world today that yields returns like investing in the work of the Lord. We'll probably be saying more about that later. The next thing I think we should consider in connection with our daily work is this, that through our work God develops graces in our lives that he couldn't develop in any other way.

Ever think of that? Through our daily work, God develops graces in our lives that he couldn't develop in any other way. You say, give me a for instance, how? Well, he develops the grace of discipline in our lives. Discipleship is discipline.

He develops brokenness in our lives. He develops persistence in our lives, perseverance, steadfastness, and many other things. God really knows what he's doing.

Also to bring the subject into focus, I think we have to say that through work we can be a witness to the world. I don't know how many of us ever ask the Lord that in our daily round that the name of the Lord Jesus might be magnified. Years ago there was a man in Chicago he worked for Wilson, the meat packer, Wilson.

His name was William Brooke, and he developed a reputation in the Chicago stockyards as the man who moved carloads of pork by prayer. Oftentimes there'd be a carload of pork out on the tracks, and maybe the market was very dead, and Bill's boss would come to him and say, Bill, you better start praying. And Bill would pray, and the pork would move when pork wasn't moving.

And he was known in the stockyards as the man who moved carloads of pork by prayer. Was God glorified in him? He said he was. And at the same time there was another man working for in the poultry division, and he also had a reputation as a man of God, and a man who took the Lord into his daily business.

Next, through our work we can contact unsaved individuals in the very context of our daily lives. And I personally believe that this is God's normal method of evangelization. I believe God's overall view of it is that in the context of our daily lives, we should be rubbing elbows with people, and that both by our life and by our lips, we should be telling about the Lord Jesus.

Matthew chapter 5 verses 14 and 15 says, We are the light of the world. A city that's set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. So in our daily work we do, how many here, are there any in the audience today who were first contacted for Christ through somebody with whom he worked? Anybody? It's interesting, isn't it? This is God's normal method of evangelization, and I don't mean that we should take the employer's time or interrupt the flow of work in witnessing for the Lord Jesus, but I do mean that we should carry the aroma of Christ with us wherever we go. Then again, in our work we can minister to other Christians.

All over the country today there are fellowships of Christians, and ministering to one another in the lunch hour and at other times. I was telling some of the friends that we visited a little chapel the other day on wheels, the truckers, they have three little chapels that go around. They park these in the terminals and minister to truckers throughout the United States.

So this is going on. You think of all the Bible classes that are going on in industry today, the work that's done for God. I really think the most effective work that's done for God today is being done in these informal Bible classes, both in the homes and in work.

But having said all that, the work is not our main calling, is it? We want to get the thing in balance. We are not called to be an electrician, a plumber, a carpenter, or a baker. It's right that we should do it.

It's right that we should do it to the glory of God, but it's not our main calling in life. Paul was a tentmaker, but he never began an epistle, Paul called to be a tentmaker. Did he? Paul called to be what? An apostle of Jesus Christ.

I can never forget that my Savior came into the world and served as a carpenter. But if you had said to him, what is your calling in life? He wouldn't have said, calls to make yokes. I believe he did make yokes, and I believe he made them well.

And somebody has suggested that if he had a sign over his carpenter shop in Nazareth, it probably would have said, my yokes fit well. I'll never forget speaking at a Christian hospital in Nazareth a few years ago, when I got up to speak to the doctors and the nurses and the staff, I found myself not standing behind a podium or a pulpit, but standing behind a carpenter's bench. A vivid reminder that in that city, two thousand years ago, the Son of God came down and served as a carpenter.

There wasn't his calling in life. His calling in life was to seek and to save that which is lost. And this is what we have to do.

We have to get this balance in our lives, and it's so difficult to do it. My job mustn't be allowed to become king in my life. And it may happen that I might have to refuse a promotion.

It may happen that I may have to refuse to be transferred to some other city. It may happen that I may have to refuse a raise, because the general tendency today is for the corporation to suck the very lifeblood, to demand everything from a person, his life to demand priority over his family and all. And I really believe that the Bible tells me that I shouldn't allow to be first in my life something that the unsaved could do just as well.

Jesus said, let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. Also, we must beware of the retirement trap. We must beware of this type of thinking that I'll give my best to the corporation and then give the retirement years to the Lord.

As you know what happens, the retirement years come, you get the golden handshake, and fall over two weeks later with a stroke. It's a delusion, and yet it's a very common one today. I like to say in this connection, I believe everyone should live by faith.

I don't think that the life of faith is something that's limited to a certain group. Everyone should live by faith. Some of us, the faith is exercised in where the funds are coming from.

Others, it's exercised what we do with the money that we get, and in some, it's in both cases. Some don't know where their funds are coming from a week or two weeks later. Some receive the funds on a regular basis.

The question is, are they using those funds in a life of faith? How much do I save for myself? Am I salting it away? And that brings me to another closely related subject, and that is this, the subject of making money. And I'd like to think with you, because really if we're going to be honest in our priorities, we'll have to say that in all too many cases, one of the great priorities in life is to make money. And I'd like you to turn with me to 1 Timothy chapter 6, to a passage that I have yet to hear being ministered on publicly in the church or assembly.

1 Timothy chapter 6. I'm just going to break in at verse 6. It says, But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into this world, and it's certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into a temptation and a snare into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is the root of all evil, all kinds of evil probably, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. I think one of the great revelations that comes to the human soul is when he realizes that God has put him here for a bigger business than to make money.

Paul here says godliness with contentment is great gain. That's really something to think about. Godliness with contentment is great gain.

How many Christians do you know today who are content? It is a wonderful thing to be content. If you're content, you have something that money won't buy. Isn't it true? But too often we become money grabbers, and we're never content with our lot in life.

And it becomes an obsession to us like holding a live electric wire you can't let go. Paul's story in one of his books tells an interesting story about this man who had this tremendous passion to always be buying more and more land. And he heard that there was cheap land among the baskers, and he could buy as much of it as he could walk around in a day.

To buy it at a very reasonable rate. So he sold all that he had, and he went to this land to get this great bargain. And started off at sunrise, and he started to walk toward the left, and he'd see some good soil, and he'd walk.

He'd detour around the good soil to take it in, and he was trying to encompass as much as he could in the course of that day. Uh, he looked at his watch, and he saw that the day was going by pretty quickly. And so he began to rush.

He had to be back by sunset. So to complete the circle, he began to run, and he ran, he ran, and he ran. And he got back to the finish line just as the sun was setting, and he dropped over dead with a heart attack.

And they buried him in a grave three by six, all the land he needed. Godliness with contentment is great gain, the Apostle Paul says. We brought nothing into the world, and it's certain we can bring nothing out.

I'm sure that many of you were impressed as I was this last week with the death of Howard Hughes. Content? I wouldn't say so. What an unhappy, miserable life he had.

Came into the world empty, and he went out empty. What was it, 16 people at his funeral? Service lasted eight minutes. The man went through the ceremony, was all over in his body, was placed away in the grave.

What a tragedy. A human being created in the image and after the likeness of God, spent his life acquiring things, and he goes out empty-handed. It's the story of every human life.

We come into the world, the baby's fist is clenched when it comes into the world, but it's quite relaxed when we leave, isn't it? Quite relaxed. We brought nothing into the world, and it's certain we can bring nothing out. There's an interesting thing that a man like that can live for the dollar, but when he goes out, he never has a dollar sign engraved on his tombstone.

Do you notice that? I've been through all kinds of cemeteries, but I've never seen the tombstone with a dollar sign on it. We can worship it in life, but we don't cling to it in death, and they want to put a cross or something religious on the tombstone when they leave. It says in verse 8, and having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.

You know, we really profess to revere the Bible and to love the Bible, but listen to what this verse says, and then let us examine our hearts this morning. Having food and raiment, therewith let us be content. I should just pause to say that the word for raiment here is the word for covering, and it could just as well refer to the roof over our heads as to the clothes we wear, and probably does.

And that's what I understand the verse to mean, that if I have food to eat, a roof over my head, and the clothes that I wear, I should be content with that. How does that set with you? Well, at this particular time, I think we have 60 theological reasons going through our minds why this wouldn't work. You know, it isn't practical, it isn't prudent, and all the rest.

It isn't common sense. The difference when I come to a verse of scripture like that, and I start putting common sense against the scripture, the common sense is no better than rat poison. It really isn't.

It becomes a positive snare when I put my mind above the word of God. And this verse says, having food and raiment, therewith be content. How many Christians do you know who are content with food, a roof, and the clothes that they wear, just to give all for Jesus? I like what David Livingston said.

He said, I am determined to have or hold nothing except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. Let me say that again. I am determined to have or hold nothing except in relation to the kingdom of Christ.

And I know that Hudson Taylor went through his possessions annually and reduced them so that what he held and what he possessed was in relation to the kingdom of Christ. I'll never forget the time I first read that quotation by Denny. He said, hmm, the only perfect life that's ever been lived on this earth, he owned nothing and left nothing but the clothes that he wore.

Isn't that something? The only perfect life that's ever been lived on this earth, he owns nothing and left nothing but the clothes that he wore. Now, I should have mentioned that this passage of scripture we read in first Timothy chapter six, it's not referring to rich people. Everybody reads it and says, oh yeah, well, that's rich people.

You put it off in that pigeonhole and it doesn't affect me and I come through unscathed. This refers to people who want to be rich. It says they that will be rich.

And that will is not future tense. It's those who are determined to be rich, those who have this lust to be rich. And that takes in an awful lot of people.

Actually, there are two ways to be rich. One is the in the abundance of your possessions, and the other is in the fewness of your wants. And the real riches lie in the second case, not in the abundance of your possessions, but in the fewness of your wants.

Years ago, Roger Kipling was speaking to a graduating class at McGill University, and he said, young people, in going through life, don't think too much of power, fame, or riches, because one day you'll meet a man who cares for none of these things, and then you'll realize how poor you are. In going through life, don't think too much of power, fame, or riches, because someday you'll meet a man who cares for none of these things, and then you'll realize how poor you are. I met that man.

His name was Jesus. And I realized how poor I really was. It says they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare into many foolish and hurtful lusts.

The lust for magnificent homes, for great display, for luxurious living, the greed that will drive men to fraud, to perjury, to cutting corners, to fudging on expense accounts and income tax returns, and eventually leads men even to robberies and to murders. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. The love of money.

You hold a coin between your eye and the Bible, you can't see the Bible. The coin can cut out God from your vision. And you know, it says here that people in doing this have erred from the faith.

I was really impressed this week as I noticed that they have erred from the faith and plunged themselves into with many sorrows. The story is told, the myth is told of Atalanta. She was famed for her running and said that she would only marry a shooter who could outstrip her in a race, and the consequences of failure would be death.

The Ptolemies, before starting, had obtained from Aphrodite three golden apples which he dropped at intervals. Atalanta stopped to pick up the golden apples and he won the race. And I can't help but feeling that in many cases our lives are screwed with golden, golden apples, and sometimes we're distracted and we go off at a tangent.

The story is told of a rich man who lived in a, on a hill at the top of a very beautiful valley. From his window he could look out over the valley. He could see all the cultivated fields, the gardens, the vineyards, and all the rest, and he could say, they're all mine.

But he had no time for the things of God. He had no time for the Bible, no time for prayer. He was absolutely alone, never bowed his knee in prayer, never opened the Bible.

His superintendent was a poor man who lived in a cottage with his wife and children, and their home was a home of joy and peace. There the Bible was read and his voice was heard in prayer in the chapel. One day the bell of the rich man's home rang and he went to the door and it was John, his superintendent.

So guess what is it, John? He said, well, he said, he said, sir, it seems strange to come and tell you this, but he said, um, I just wanted to tell you, he said, I had a dream last night and I wanted to share the contents with, of the dream with you. And he said, well, it's kind of strange, you know, he thought that something was wrong with the horses or something like that, but John was very insistent to share this dream with you. He had a voice telling him that the richest man in the valley would die at midnight that night.

God seemed to tell him that, and he wanted to come, he didn't want to offend the man, but he wanted to come and tell him. And this man said, John, don't worry. He said, I feel fine.

He said, I never felt better in my life and I don't believe in dreams anyway. So John left him and went about his, his daily work and the rich man went to the window, looked out over the valley and he said, silly man, he said, uh, such nonsense. He said, I'm feeling absolutely fine.

But as the day went on, he began to think more and more about it. And around 10 o'clock in the morning, he decided to go down and see his doctor. So he got in his carriage and he went down to see the doctor and he had a complete physical checkup.

And the doctor said, you're in wonderful shape. He said, I'll give you 20 more years. So the rich man thought, well, that's just exactly what I thought.

And he went home feeling somewhat better, but he said to the doctor before he left, you know, I wonder, would you like to come up and have a supper with me tonight, you know, and perhaps stay for a visit after supper? And the doctor consented to do that. Fine. And so the arrangement was made that he'd come around, uh, seven o'clock that night.

All day long, the rich man tried to occupy himself, but he kept hearing those words, the richest man in the valley will die at midnight tonight. So anyway, seven o'clock came, they sat down to a sumptuous meal and, uh, talked, probably not to talk about what was uppermost in his mind, but they talked. The doctor tried to leave at 11 o'clock and the rich man really prevailed on him to just stay, you know, a little longer.

And so he did. And the rich man, without telling him why he was doing this, he got him to stay till past midnight o'clock, midnight. So the doctor went home.

The rich man was dead. Half an hour later, the bell rang. It was a teenage girl, the daughter of John.

And, uh, the rich man said, what is it? What's the trouble? Well, she said, my mother just come, Kate, my mother asked me to come and tell you that my father died a half an hour ago. The richest man in the valley. Yeah, it is.

God sees things differently than we see them, doesn't he? The richest man in the valley had died at midnight. Paul Getty is alleged to be the richest man in the world today. He's called the solitary billionaire.

He lives alone in a magnificent mansion in Surrey, England. Happy life. He owns oil wells, refineries, tankers, pipelines, hotels, a life insurance company, a finance company, and aircraft companies.

He has surrounded his 700 acre estate with body guards, vicious dogs, steel bars, searchlights, bells, sirens. In addition to being afraid of planes and ships and crackpots, he fears disease, old age, helplessness, and death. He's lonely and gloomy, and he admits that money can't buy happiness.

And yet, when we think of priorities in life, you think of how large this all looms in our life. And we hear the words of the great apostle Paul say, for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. May the Lord deliver us from the love of money, from falling into these terrible traps that are set for us all around the world today.

Okay, another priority. I want to ask myself, what place does the honors of this world hold in my life? What place does the honors of this world hold in my life? The world has a way of making its theme, its things seem very glamorous and attractive. Let me ask you some questions in that connection.

Why is it that a baseball game is often more exciting than a prayer meeting? Why is it that the presidency of the United States is more appealing than overseership in a local assembly? Why is it that a successful business career is often more alluring than service for Jesus Christ? Why is TV more gripping than the study of the word of God? I ask myself these questions all the time. Why are men willing to spend the best part of their life for a ribbon, a medal, a trophy, and not for some eternal reward? Why are so many willing to do for dollars what they wouldn't do for love for the Savior? Why is it that the lure of a uniform draws young people in the way that the plain clothes of a dedicated disciple wouldn't do? You ever think about these things? We see that marine marching along in his dress uniform. Horrific, isn't it? Has real appeal and real attraction.

Why is that? Now, here's the world all about us with all of these things. Well, I'll tell you why. It is the difference between sight and faith.

That's what it is. Sight looks upon these things that are outward and alluring and appealing, and faith looks beyond them to what really counts. And we're called to walk by faith.

I'd like to suggest to you this morning that the Christian has nothing to do with the honors of this world. Napoleon once held up a piece of ribbon and he said, with these I could build an empire. And that's really quite amazing because you can go down to the five and dime store and buy a ribbon by the yard, can't you? Why is it that if you just take a piece of ribbon and cut it this way and cut it this way and put some gold lettering on it, men will give their finest exertions for that piece of ribbon? And yet people forget that the Lord Jesus is holding out to us incorruptible crowns.

I remember years ago when I was a kid, we used to go and watch the marathon in Boston, men running 26 miles, and they were given kind of a diadem, a wreath of leaves. I often wonder, were all of those wreaths that Clarence DeMar won years ago where they are today? I often wonder how many of them have made their way to pawn shops and all the rest are gathering dust in some lonely attic. The honors of this world, and yet they do have an appeal for Christians.

I like the story of William Kelly. I'm sure that most of you have heard it or read it, but William Kelly was a real scholar of the Word of God years ago in England, and he took his nephew and tutored him in Greek. And when he went to the university, the Greek professor said, where did you learn Greek? And he said, my uncle William Kelly tutored me.

So when there was a vacancy in the Greek department there at the university, a committee called on William Kelly and offered him the chair in Greek. And he didn't seem to be too interested, and they couldn't understand that. Here they were holding one of the great honors of that area before him, and he didn't want it.

And so they brought out their biggest guns and their strongest arguments to try to induce him to accept this position, and he wasn't interested. And finally, one of them said to him in exasperation, what's the matter, Mr. Kelly? Don't you want to make a name for yourself in the world? And he said, which world, gentlemen? That puts it right. Years ago there was a Chinese brother that came to the United States for training, and his name is John Sung.

Perhaps some of you have read the story of his life, and the honors of this world had a tremendous attraction for him, especially coming to the United States from China. But on the way back home to China on the ship, the Lord began having dealings with him, giving himself for the honors of this world. And not many days later, he had a strange dream.

He looked into an open coffin and he saw that the corpse was himself, dressed in academic cap and gown and holding a diploma. And he heard a voice saying, John Sung is dead, dead to the world. And then the corpse began to stir and awaken, and angels above began to weep until he called out, don't weep angels, I'll remain dead to the world and to self.

And on the way back to China one day, as the vessel neared the end of the voyage, he took all his trophies, all his medallions and all his ribbons, and he threw them overboard. He said, they mean nothing to me. It's good that we have a proper sense of priorities, that we see the honors of this world the way God sees them, and then they'll hold little attraction for us.

Shall we pray? He really disrupted for a little while, but that's novelty. Have us, are we, who are members of the bride, getting ourselves ready to be presentable to our savior, the bride's beautiful, from the church. I had numerous weddings, and of course, in my 20 years, plus in the army.

I had some before, and I've had some since. And I always like to make a practice, and we've always met in those weddings, to go into both the bride and the groom in their separate places ahead of time, and let the water flow. I don't think I've ever walked into the room where a bride, they were, they were alerted to this ahead of time, but I don't think I ever walked into a bride's room where she was dressing herself, getting ready for the wedding ceremony, without finding her, with her attendants, being put together into the best possible appearance and condition.

For the people that were there, oh well, I guess, sort of, but not really. She wanted to be at her level top best when she, the first time she kissed him as her husband. What are we looking for the Lord to return for in the rapture? To get out of a jam as a novelty, or are we getting ourselves ready to be the best possible, the most acceptable we can possibly be to him? We deserve it.

He went through all the pains of eternal hell for us in Calvary. He deserves all that we can do to put ourselves into the best possible shape. We look for Jesus.

We think of how you've gone down to the depths to rescue us, to seed us in heavenly places with yourself. Lord, we realize that today we're children of the heavenly king, called from above in heavenly men by birth who once were the citizens of earth. God forbid that we should ever content ourselves with the honors of this world that gave you nothing but a cross and a grave.

Lord forbid that we should ever fear the frown of the world or seek its applaud. Help us to walk in separation from it, witnessing to it, we do pray. Deliver us, Lord, from the lust of money, we do ask.

We pray that as disciples of the Lord Jesus we might be content with food and covering. Pray that you'll give us wisdom to put our occupation in its proper place, that we might live for that which is sinful and prior. We ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake.

Take some light. So we probably have more questions here than we'll be able to answer, so we'll just hold them over. Don't feel that we're passing you by if your question doesn't get answered.

The first one is, in the light of this insight, is it proper to hold a job that caters to the whims of the world? And an illustration is given of what is meant by that. Generally speaking, I think that a Christian can engage in any honorable work. However, his conscience might be called into play, and he might have a conscience even in some work.

Now, for instance, in advertising, could you spend your life advertising differences in cigarettes? You know, well, I believe some Christians probably could do it, others couldn't do it. And so I think this is something that the Christian has to work out on his knees before the Lord, remembering that whatsoever is not of faith is sin, and that if in his particular case he can't do it, he shouldn't do it. But I don't think he should judge others either.

Almost any job you have today, you'd really have to go out of the world completely to separate yourself from the whims of the world. And God does will that his people be mingled in the society and bearing witness for him. So I would say, first of all, if the job is honorable, generally speaking, a Christian can engage in any honorable occupation.

If an individual Christian has a conscience about some phase of that work, he shouldn't do it. But remember that another Christian might not have that conscience about it. 1 Timothy 5.8 says, If any man provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.

Well, let's turn to 1 Timothy 5. And notice that this passage has to do with the care of widows in the assembly. These are widows who are bereft. Their own family should take care of them.

There are cases where their own family doesn't take care of them, and then the church, the local fellowship, should take care of them. But it says in verse 8, If any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. Now, I think the important thing to see in this passage of Scripture is that this has to do with the widow's current needs, and not with possible future needs.

It says nothing in this chapter about laying up a nest egg for the future, for those relatives. It says nothing about that. It has to do with their current needs.

And if you try to force anything else in, you're putting something in that isn't there. However, the question goes on to say, Would this have any bearing on a savings as a hedge against periods of unemployment, sickness, etc.? If so, how much savings or insurance is appropriate in the case of a sincere Christian who wants to really honor the Lord? We'll be talking about this more in the next session. But let me just say something about insurance.

First of all, what you do generally, you'll have to do in fellowship with your wife, in this whole connection. You can live without insurance and honor God. My attitude is this.

Somebody said, Once you walk in the water, you never want to ride in a boat again. The life of faith is a life that's open to all of us. And we can walk in up to our toes, up to our ankles, up to our knees, up to our thighs.

We can swim in it. It's a life of faith. And I really believe the principle is, according to your faith, And if you have faith to say, No, I'm not going to have insurance.

And that money that I would have spent on insurance, I'm going to spend it in the work of the Lord. I personally believe God will honor you. I don't believe he'll ever lack.

But if you don't have that faith, you better get the insurance. Really. And if your wife doesn't have that faith, you better get the insurance.

If you say, No, I think I won't have insurance, and I'll take that money and invest it in a power speedboat, you better get the insurance. The rest of the question, I really am not putting it off, but we will be answering it, Lord willing, as we go on. With respect to 1 Timothy 6, verse 8, what criteria would you apply in setting salaries for employees in a Christian organization? 1 Timothy 6, verse 8, Having food and raiment, let us be therewith.

First of all, let me say this, and I believe, I believe that a lot of Christians think that if they really ran their business according to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount, they'd go broke. I don't believe that. I believe that's just exactly what the business world is looking for for men who will step in and take the principles of the Word of God and really apply them.

As far as running a business is concerned and paying salaries to the employees, I think it's one of the greatest opportunities for testifying for the Lord Jesus and showing that Christianity really works in the marketplace. You get a beautiful insight into this in Matthew chapter 20, where you have a very strange parable that the Lord Jesus told, and I'm not going to take the time to go into it in detail, but you remember how the Lord likened the kingdom of heaven to a man that's a household, and he went out early in the morning, and he bargained with some fellows that were standing out there in the marketplace to come and work in his vineyard, and they worked there all day. And then all during the day, he went out and he found some more unemployed, and he brought them all in.

He said, go to work for me, and whatever's right, I'll pay you. And at the end of the day, his treasurer went out there, his manager, and he called them all in, and he paid them all a penny a day. Those that worked all day and those that worked an hour, they got a penny, same wages.

And the fellows that entered into a labor management bargaining agreement at six o'clock in the morning, they said, what's going on here? We've grown the burden and heat of the day, and we've got a penny, and you pay a penny to these people that work for an hour. And he said, boy, is that in the Bible? Maybe if I don't look at it, it'll go away. It's really very beautiful.

What it teaches is that the Lord goes by need and not by greed. That's what we need in the business world today. You see, this man knew that these men were unemployed.

They wanted to go down the safe way and fill the market baskets and take home food for their families, but they couldn't get work. So he brought them on. The ones that were hired first in the morning, they got what they bargained for.

They bargained to work all day for a penny a day. They got justice. The rest of the people in the parable got grace.

And I think that's beautiful, that this man really loved his employees. He was more interested in his employees than he was in racking up gigantic profits. And that's really where the rubber hits the road, isn't it? That's where the tension comes.

What am I going to put the emphasis on? Am I really out after the profits at all costs, or do I have a ministry in the lives of those that work for me? Well, this man realized that he did. And those that bargained with him got what they bargained for, but the rest got grace. And they were all able to go at the end of the day, and they went down the safe way, and they brought home enough groceries for their families.

Isn't that beautiful? Well, to me that answers the question, really, what criteria would you apply in setting salaries for employees in a Christian organization? I would say that I would be more interested in people than in dollars, and have a ministry with those people that work for me. Okay, if there are any questions on any of this as we go along, feel free to speak out. No problem.

It says, when one does not have the willingness or desire to follow after the Lord, what does one do? Well, the only thing I know a person can do like that is get down before the Lord and ask Him to give you the willingness, really. Whenever I come to a roadblock like this in my life, and I don't seem to have the willingness, I get down on my knees and ask the Lord to give it to me. If I know it's something that should be in my life, and it isn't there, well, He's the one to take it to.

In the interest of the shepherd's meetings by your colleagues, do you have schedules of these meetings? How may we attend one of these meetings? Would it be possible to have one in this area? Please elaborate, maybe put information in the Blackboard. All I can tell you is that there's a shepherd's seminar going on this weekend in Detroit, and I think it's the first week in June there will be one in Chicago. Do either Mike or Doug, do you know when the dates are in Chicago? I don't know, but what I would suggest is this, if there is a godly exercise to have that seminar down in this area, all it would take would be an invitation, working out the details, some man to handle the correspondence, the paperwork at this end, and no problem at all.

And I would think that would be the better thing rather than trailing off as a group to Chicago. Yes? Do you have Jack's phone number? 632-9901. 415, I think, is the area code, and the number is 632-9901.

Is that what you mean? Yeah, we'll just take a phone call or a letter to Jack Davies, and then they would work it out. There's another question here about savings and retirement funds, life insurance policies. I've answered it in part, and we'll be talking about it more.

This one says, don't you think that many groups of believers are so concerned that every believer have a secular job that somewhere along the line they hinder the Lord's work by not freeing some to serve the flock full time, and the flock is neglected? Well, I suppose it's inevitable that question would come up. Let me say this. There are many situations today where the elders can combine their secular work, and you know what we mean when we use these terms, when they can combine their secular work and really be effectively serving the Lord, too, both in the secular work and in the local assembly.

There are other cases where it isn't possible, and I think certainly the scriptures provide for the freeing of men to give themselves more fully to this work. You say, how do you know? Well, all you can do is live close to the Lord, be sensitive to his leading, be available. I personally have a feeling that if we're available to the Lord, it's his responsibility to move the checkers on the board, don't you think? And if in a particular assembly there's this terrific need, the elders are not able to do it sufficiently, it may very well be that God would have them free some brother that might be a servant to the assembly in a very special way.

Please explain 1 Timothy 6, 17, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy. Well, my explanation of that is it means it's exactly what it says. I'm a very simple believer and perhaps a very naive believer, and I think that God runs this universe for his people.

I believe United Airlines flies for the people of God. I believe God has the street sweepers and the garbage collectors, and they're all working for us. And I base that upon 1 Corinthians.

It says, all things are yours, and he are Christ's, and Christ is God. And I go through Colorado, and I see all your beautiful land, and I think it's all mine. Really? And these farmers are keeping it for me.

They don't realize it, but I'm going to come into the possession of it someday. But that doesn't mean that I should float along on a sea of luxury and comfort and ease in the meantime. It isn't time for us to put our crowns on.

It's a form of dishonor to the monarch when you put your crown on before he does, and his crowning day hasn't come. So in the meantime, we follow him in a pathway of rejection. A special mention is made of Abraham in Hebrews chapter 11.

It says, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the ears with him, the same promise. God had said to Abraham, Abraham, there it is, the land is all yours. And Abraham, everywhere he went, he built an altar for God, but he never built a permanent place for himself.

He dwelt as a pilgrim, and apparently that really pleased the heart of God, because he makes special mention of it in his words. And I think that the lesson for us today, it's all ours, brethren, the whole thing, and we're going to come into the possession of it one of these days. In the meantime, it's ours to follow him in a pathway of renunciation and discipleship.

How do you understand and act the having all things in common? Is this for today? What about the danger of rice Christians? Well, I believe the principle is there for today, and I tell you, I'm scared of these interpretations of scripture that say that was just for the Acts period. We put it in kind of a pigeonhole just for Acts. I think it's explained pretty well in 2 Corinthians chapter 8. What we have is not our own, we're stewards of the Lord, and Paul is writing to the Corinthians here, he's telling them of the desperate need of the poor saints in Jerusalem, and he's saying, look, there should be a flow of funds down there to Jerusalem.

It says in verse 13, For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened, but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want, that there may be equality. What God wants is that, as Jim Elliott said, he might release the tension of the grasping hand, that we might hold things for the giver, that wherever there's a need in the church, there might be the flow of funds to meet that need. Maybe today you'll be helping somebody else, maybe some years to come they'll be helping you.

That's exactly what was going on in the New Testament, and that's how I understand the holding all things in common for today. If this doesn't answer your question, feel free to speak out. I had a question about that.

I've seen several times it's an experience where somebody will come along to the church, this has been working down in Ecuador, they'll come along and they have a need, and a man will, he needs an operation on his eye, but anyway he'll come and he'll make a confession of faith, and his sister was a Christian, and he'd known her for some years, and so he made a confession of faith, and then he mentioned about two weeks later he had a need for an operation in his eyes. So the brothers, you know, we helped him. We gave him some shoes and things like that they needed.

So he got his operation, then we got medicine and things like this, and his wife even made a confession, but then you think about two weeks later after he was completely cured, he just disappeared. And this wasn't, you know, just one instance. I mean, there were many times.

Did he have the operation? Yes, he did. He had the operation. Oh, I wouldn't feel badly about that.

You did it in the name of Jesus? I wouldn't feel badly about that. I realize what you're saying, though, are the danger of right Christians, but God used you to alleviate human need, and you did it in the name of the Lord Jesus, and he got the glory. I think that's all right.

Even in all your stewardship, there's always the possibility of giving to an unworthy cause. There's always that possibility. None of us is so sharp that we can eliminate all that.

That's all right. We didn't, we did it for the Lord. He's going to reward, and I don't purposely, I will not give money to anything that I would think would harm a man, but if I feel it's a genuine case of need, even if it may, I may be mistaken, I'd still rather give and be mistaken than not give.

Take that chance. Better to err on the side of grace, isn't it? Is there a question here? You mean by right Christian, the movement of what you're saying, someone just comes around for what they can receive? You see, there are countries in the world today where a man will profess to be saved, he'll be baptized, he'll be in fellowship in the assembly for 20 years, and all he wants is a trip to America. Well, this is true.

I could show you instances of this in the world today. It's all he wants, a trip to America. It's a very poor country.

You run into this in the work of God. It's a problem, it's a great problem in a country like India, where there's, what is it, 10 million beggars in India? What do you do as a Christian there, walking along the streets? The poverty is appalling. It's a problem for missionaries there.

It's a problem for Christians there. Well, the thing to do is to, first of all, the first important thing I think to do is to connect all our giving with the name of Lord Jesus. To give in His name, for His glory, and make it a testimony for Him.

And then if you find you've been taken, that's on you. I would say, especially in this case where the man had the operation, he's a human being, you know, and he needed the operation, I think it's okay. And the last chapter hasn't been written yet.

Maybe you'll meet him in glory, and he'll say, thank you very much, it was through your kindness that I'm here. You mentioned a couple of things along that. You said, like, what about borrowing? Like, there was a man who would borrow money, and he borrowed it on several occasions, and never returned the money.

And yet he had a desperate need. He was very, very poor. And he didn't have a job.

And then sometimes he'd get a job, but he'd lose it after a while. And so he continually borrowed. And we didn't know exactly what to do.

And after a while, we kind of felt we were doing wrong in giving it to him, because he became so dependent. And there's one instance in Scripture where we sort of justified ourselves in the sense was that the Lord, when he fed the multitude, and they came after him, and he said that, you know, you're not following me because you've seen the sign, but because you've had your village filled. And they were following him for an unworthy reason.

And so it's difficult at times to know when you should give to everyone who asks of you, or, you know, where will you really be doing wrong in giving to that person. Well, the only thing that bothers me is you said that he really needed it. Didn't you? You said he really needed it.

He was really poor. One of the problems, one of the things that creates these problems, I'm not speaking about you, Will, in this, but one of the reasons that we have these terrific problems is we have so much. If we really forsook all to follow Christ, it wouldn't be such a problem.

Okay, our time is gone. In fact, I've transgressed a little. We'll save the rest of them till the next time.

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