

I. Introduction

- a. **SPEAKER:** Feel free to joke around about how hard math can be and whether you enjoyed it or not in school. If possible, share a humorous personal story about your experiences with math problems.
- b. We all did math problems in school—and some of us did better with that particular subject than others.
 - i. In school, we learned that if we started with \$1,000 and gave away \$100, we would have \$900 left.
 - ii. While that's correct arithmetic, sometimes addition works a little differently. When generosity and giving are involved, God has a way of changing the math. Over the course of our lives, we find that we never really lose when we give generously.
- c. It's not mystical or magical. It's not prosperity theology. It's just that God's economy works differently. His kingdom priorities focus on giving and being generous.
 - i. Giving is the lifeblood of the believer. Generosity is necessary for our hearts to beat. It transforms us.
 - ii. People understand the difference between a closed fist and an open hand. The clenched fist is the international sign of anger and violence, but even a dog understands that an open hand is welcoming and friendly.
 1. When you hold money tightly, nothing can get away, but nothing can get in either. In contrast, if your hand is open, some can get away, but more can come in.
 2. Your attitude toward money—open or closed—is an indication of your spirit.

II. What Stewardship Means

- a. One key to an open hand is understanding the biblical principles of ownership and stewardship.
- b. **SPEAKER:** Call two volunteers up on stage. Let one represent a banker and one represent "us."
 - i. Have "us" deposit \$1,000 with the "banker."
 - ii. Encourage the members of the audience to imagine what would happen if the volunteer representing "us" went to withdraw his money and discovered that the banker had used the money for his own personal gain: "I needed this" and "I needed that."
 - iii. Affirm that if the person with whom we had entrusted our money violated that trust, we would be pretty upset. And we certainly wouldn't entrust anything else to that person.

- c. SPEAKER: Change the scenario a bit. Point out that “us” is really God, while the “banker” represents us.
 - i. God is the owner, and He entrusts resources to us. We get to hold it, but it’s really His stuff.
 - ii. He wants us to take care of our families, and He doesn’t mind if we have some nice stuff. But we have to treat what we have like it’s His stuff . . . because it is!
 - iii. Thank the volunteers and send them back to their seats.
- d. The Bible clearly tells us that God owns it all.
 - i. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (Psalm 24:1).
- e. Since He owns it all, we are simply stewards. Unfortunately, stewardship is a misunderstood term these days.
 - i. Inside the church, the idea of stewardship has come to mean a building campaign or a fundraiser.
 - ii. Outside the church, stewardship usually is associated with how we treat the environment.
 - iii. To understand how we are supposed to handle God’s resources, we need an accurate understanding of what being a steward is all about.
- f. Real stewardship means we are asset managers for God.
 - i. In medieval times, the lord ruled over the realm. But the lord had a “steward” to manage all his assets and business dealings.
 - 1. The steward cared for the lord’s holdings, even though he didn’t really own anything himself.
 - 2. The steward enjoyed the pleasure of the lord, as long as he faithfully dealt with the lord’s resources.
 - ii. The translators of the King James Bible saw that “steward” was a perfect word to describe how we should view ourselves in relation to God’s blessings.
 - 1. We don’t really own anything.
 - 2. We manage the wealth of the Lord.
 - iii. So, stewards are really asset managers, and stewardship is really about how we handle the Lord’s wealth.
 - 1. Our dealings should benefit the Lord. The way we handle His resources should be a blessing to Him and make Him more famous.

III. Why Do We Give?

- a. For Christians, our giving begins with our tithe to our local church. That’s 10% of our increase.
- b. We may think that we give because God needs our money.

- i. But we've already established that God owns it all. It's pretty funny (and arrogant) for us to think that God needs our money.
 - ii. SPEAKER: Joke . . . If God wanted our money, He'd take it and leave a greasy spot or a pile of ashes where we were sitting.
 - c. If God doesn't need our money, we may think that we give because the church needs our money.
 - i. But the annual budgets of most churches are bigger than your annual budget.
 - d. So why does God want us to give?
 - i. Giving makes us more like Christ.
 - 1. God is a giver. He gave His only Son (John 3:16).
 - 2. We are made in His image (Genesis 1:27).
 - 3. So when we give, we reflect His giving through our lives.
 - ii. Giving transforms us. When we give, we become more like Him and like His Son. We become more Christlike.
 - 1. Water that flows freely tends to stay cleaner. Water that backs up tends to stagnate and become scummy.
 - 2. Giving frees us to be more creative and passionate because we are less selfish.
 - iii. Giving is a form of praise and worship.
 - 1. We are called to be cheerful givers (2 Corinthians 9:7).
 - 2. In the Greek, the word for "cheerful" is related to the English word "hilarious." So, we should be hilarious givers!
 - iv. Giving involves spiritual warfare.
 - 1. God promises to "rebuke the devourer" for our sakes when we faithfully give (Malachi 3:11).
 - 2. We serve a big God who can protect us and meet our needs.
 - 3. SPEAKER: In the video, Dave talks about God dealing with the demons of water pumps on our cars. Use your own humorous take on this principle to share it with your audience. If appropriate, share a personal story where God has come through for you in this area.
 - v. Giving is *not* a matter of salvation. God loves us and cannot love us more than He already does. Nothing can make Him stop loving His children.
 - 1. While He's not looking for people who have it all together and do everything right, He is looking for faithful managers who will handle His resources well. The biblical principle is that those who can be trusted will be entrusted with more.

IV. Conclusion

- a. Believers can glorify God and use His resources wisely by taking advantage of the “Displacement Theory.”
 - i. When you pour clean water into a dirty glass, the clean water tends to displace the bad stuff.
 - ii. Dallas Willard talked about Christians taking over sections of the culture and owning those areas so the enemy cannot gain a foothold there.
 - 1. Christians should use this principle in the way they handle God’s resources. We use His resources to displace evil in the world.
 - 2. If we fail to use our resources wisely, the enemy will gain ground in the culture.
 - iii. To make this happen, we’re going to have to do better in our stewardship. According to research done by the Barna Group, only 9% of adults who identified themselves as “born again” tithed from their income.
 - 1. If we are going to displace evil, we’ve got to become faithful in managing His resources for His glory.
- b. Generous giving frees us to do more for the kingdom of God. It also serves as a reminder that He owns it all and that we are asset managers for His glory.
 - i. Faithful managers are given more to handle. Those who cannot be trusted are not entrusted with more.