

SEE THE WORLD

PART 1: “MONEY”

*NOTE: The following content is a raw transcript and has not been edited for grammar, punctuation, or word usage.*

I have a niece; her name is Alena. And when Alena was nine years old, she was starting her fourth season of swim team, her fourth season of swim team. And Alena loved to swim—loved the pool, loves swim team, loved the people on her team, loved everything about it—but she would lose every single race. She would come in last. And they thought she would be discouraged and wanna quit. She didn't wanna quit. In fact, she was super happy—everybody knew her name, she was a super social, it was a great social environment. But she kept losing all the races. So at the beginning of her fourth season, my sister-in-law, Allison, was writing her events on her wrist. You know, with the magic marker or the felt-tip pen, and she looks at Alena who is nine and says, "Alena, I want you to get out there, and I want you to win this race." And Alena's eyes got big and she said, "It's a race?"

"I thought we were here to meet people, because it's called a swim meet. They don't call it a swim race."

Now, here's what I wanna talk about the next few minutes, and what we're gonna talk about in the next week as well. Every once in a while...and you've had one of these perhaps. Every once in a while, there's kind of an aha moment, where suddenly you see something about your world differently. A relationship, something related to a relationship, your job, school, grades, whatever it might be. And in that moment, it's like nothing actually changes, but your perspective changes in such an extraordinary way that you really see the world differently. You see the world perhaps as it actually is, not the way you had been taught perhaps to see it.

Steven Covey says it this way. This is a great synopsis of what we're talking about. "We see the world not as it is, but as we are." This is from *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. “We don't see the world as it is, we see this as we are, or as we are conditioned, or as we are taught to see it.” Now the problem is this. What this means is, this isn't a religious thing or Christian thing, this is just like a thing thing, okay? It means that every single one of us could be holding on to views or holding on to perspectives that are actually holding us back. Like Alena, we could be holding on to a perspective or a view of something—we see it the way we see it, and consequently, we act the way we think we are supposed to act based on how we see it. And our perspective or the way that we see the world, or part of the world, could actually be holding us back.

This is why in Christianity—and if you're Christian, I hope you know this, and if not if you're not a Christian, if you're thinking about it, here's something just to consider if you ever become one. In Christianity, central to Christianity, is this idea of what the apostle Paul called renewing the mind. Renewing the mind. And renewing the mind is basically learning to see the world the way God sees the world, so that when God asks us to do something it makes more sense. Learning to see the world the way God created the world. Learning to see relationships the way God created relationships. Learning to see marriage, learning to see money, learning to see our professional life, learning to see our potential, our opportunities. Learning to see the world the way that God created it to be, so that what he asks us to do makes more sense. Because when we see as God sees, we will be more inclined to do as God says.

When we see as God sees, we are more inclined to do as God says. Now, I've shared this with you before, I pray this all the time. Years and years and years ago, this just became a constant prayer for me. Every time I pray silently or quietly or by myself, this just comes out. I just say, "God, I just wanna see as you see. I wanna see my family the way you see my family. I wanna see my relationship with my dad the way you see that relationship. Help me to see as you see, so I'll do as you say. Help me to see as you see, so I'll do as you say."

And here's why. Because when you're raising children, it is enough to say, "Do as I say." All of our parents told us that. Every parent does it. It's like, "Honey, when the kids are little, 'Do as I say, do as I say, do as I say.'" But at some point, it needs to change to, "See as I see, see as I see, see as I see. And then you won't resist doing what I say, because what I'm asking you to do actually makes sense if you see as I see." Your heavenly Father feels the exact same way about you. Your heavenly Father, as in parent, wants you to see the world the way he sees the world, because you will be more inclined to do exactly what he's asked you to do.

Here's the cool thing. To help us out with this, God sent Jesus into the world. The Old Testament, the old covenant, was a relationship between God and the Jewish people. And through that relationship, God birthed his Son into this world for the entire world to give the world an even better picture of how God created the world and how the world is to operate. And through Jesus, we get as close to understanding God as we will ever get. And we get as close to God as we'll ever get, and we get as close to seeing as God sees as we will ever get. Because Jesus was God in a bod. And Jesus actually said, here's something he said, "If you really know me, you will know my Father." And he got in trouble for this kinda stuff all the time. Jesus was constantly equating himself with God. And the people felt like that was blasphemy, to equate yourself with God. And it was blasphemy for him to equate himself with God, except he predicted his own death and resurrection, pulled it off, and it was like, "Oh, okay. Never mind, okay. If you predict your own death and resurrection, you can say anything you want, okay."

So, here's where it gets interesting. One day Jesus is teaching, and he looks around the audience. There was always a crowd with Jesus. He sees sinners, he sees tax gatherers, he sees all this group, so he decides, "Hey, this is a good opportunity for me to help this group see something the way that God sees it."

And on that particular afternoon, he chose to teach them how God viewed sinners and sin. So he told them a trilogy of parables. He talked and told the story of a lost sheep. And maybe you remember that sheep? The story of the shepherd who had 100 sheep. He lost one and went after the one. Then he told the story of a lost coin. A woman had some valuable coins, lost one, and she went looking for it. Then he told the story of a lost boy, the lost son we call the Prodigal Son. A father lost a son and couldn't wait for the son to return. And Jesus taught the group, "Here's how God views sinners, and here's how God views people who are far from God." And when he finished, the religious leaders were just rolling their eyes, because they knew, once again, they were the bad guys in the parable, like they always were. And they're turning to leave, and Jesus isn't finished. Because Jesus wants to teach that group in particular something else about how God sees the world.

But instead of saying to them, "Hey, hey, hey. Before you leave, I’ve got one more for you." Jesus does what Jesus does, because he was the master teacher, and Jesus says, loud enough for all of them to hear, just as they're turning to leave, "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions." And he had them at hello, because they were all rich men who never knew how their household slaves were managing the household money. They were all rich men who did their business through slaves and servants, and it was hard to keep track of who was doing what, and who had what, and where things were going in that day and age. So Jesus looks at the crowd, but in his gaze, his peripheral vision, he sees these religious leaders leaving, and he says, "There was a rich man whose household manager was accused of wasting his possessions."

And this group of religious leaders apparently turned back around and leaned in, and Jesus continued, because Jesus was about to explain to them, and explain to you, and explain to me, how God views money So here's how it goes. There was a rich man and he called the man, this rich man called this man, this money manager, in, and he asked him, "What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management because you cannot be my manager. You cannot be the manager any longer." So this rich man hears that his money manager, who's doing all of his business in the community, has been very irresponsible—too many loose ends, maybe not being honest. In fact, we find out he wasn't being honest about things. So he calls him, and he says, "Okay. Look, I want you to kinda wrap things up. I want you to close out the books. I want you to bring me the spreadsheets, and then you are fired." Jesus continues. The manager—the money manager who's about to lose his job—the manager said to himself, "What should I do now? My master is taking away my job. And I'm an inside guy. I don't have calluses anywhere. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg."

So the man in the parable, the money manager in the parable, has a little bit of time, and he has a little bit of opportunity to figure out what he is going to do in the future. The money manager has a little bit of time, he has a little bit of opportunity, because he still has some leverage. He still has some opportunity, a little bit of time, a little bit of opportunity, to figure out what he's going to do in the future. And then it dawns on him. "I know. I know what I'll do now." I added that word. "So that when... ", future, "I lose my job here... ", now, "People will... ", future, "Welcome me into their houses. I know what I can do with my little bit of time and my little bit of opportunity to secure my future."

So he called in each one of his master's debtors, because his master had people that owed him money just like he owed other people money. He called in each one of his master's debtors. We don't know how many there were. And he asked the first one, "How much do you owe my master?" And this particular gentleman, who he had done business with before, said, "I owe your master 900 gallons of olive oil." Now this rich man was a merchant. He was like the original commodity trader, and so he could trade in actual commodities. And the manager—the dishonest manager that's on the verge and who's lost his job, it's just a matter of time now—the dishonest manager said to him, "Quickly take your bill, sit down and quickly, because I don't have much time, make it 450. I'm gonna cut your bill in half." To which the olive oil importer-exporter looked at him and said, "Seriously? You're gonna cut what I owe your master in half?" He says, "Quickly write it down. Let's finish this up." "Seriously? You're gonna cut it to half? Thank you so much." "Hey, if there's ever anything I can do for you, let me know." To which the money manager thought, "I will, and it will be sooner than you imagine."

Then he asked a second merchant who owed his master. Then he asked the second, "How much do you owe my master?" "1,000 bushels of wheat," he replied. And he told him, "Hey, take your bill and make it 800. I'm gonna cut it. You're gonna only owe 800. If you can go ahead and we can finish this out, 800, hey, we'll be good to go." "Oh, thank you so much. Hey, I really appreciate that. Hey, if there's ever anything..." "I know, I know, I'll let you." Now, at this point in the parable, Jesus' audience—you know, those rich guys—they're like, "I can't believe this." They're expecting... "When the rich guy finds out what his manager has done, he's gonna string him up. I mean, he's gonna put him in debtors’ prison. He's gonna make him repay what he just gave away, because it wasn't his to give away. He was managing the rich guy's stuff. How dare you mismanage what wasn't yours to begin with?"

And so Jesus can feel the energy in the crowd. And I think Jesus smiled. Because he knew how they saw their wealth and their stuff, and he knew he was about to teach them how God in heaven sees it. And to their surprise, the next thing that comes out of Jesus' mouth is this: "The master, the rich guy, commended the dishonest manager." Why? Because he was dishonest? No. Because he had acted shrewdly. He'd acted, here's a word we don't use, prudently. He had thought ahead and prepared for the future. He had a little bit of time and he had a little bit of opportunity, and he used it wisely.

And the people in Jesus' audience, maybe like you if you've never heard this this parable before, they were dumbfounded. It's just quiet. All they can hear is street noise like, "What? The rich guy commended the dishonest money manager?" In other words, you picture this overweight, older guy, kinda chuckling and kinda patting his money manager on the back, going, "Wow. You are smarter than I thought. You're shrewd. You have secured your future at my expense." And at this point, Jesus pulls out of the parable. The parable is over. And now Jesus has their undivided attention, and maybe he has our undivided attention too, and maybe your undivided attention. And now Jesus begins to teach from the parable the way that God views every single dollar and every single thing that ever comes our way that we ever call our own. Now, there's not a "gotcha." We are all just discovering together how God views our stuff. Here's what Jesus says: "For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light." Which doesn't help us one single bit, does it? So why does Jesus do this? Just tell us what you're thinking.

Here's what he's saying. He's saying, "Folks, the people who think that all there is to life is this life, the people who think that once you die, it's over rover, the people who think that there is nothing beyond this life, those people, Jesus says—and you may be one of those people, that you just think that all there is to this life, is this life—And Jesus says, "You know what, you are a lot more shrewd. You are a much better planner than the people who believe there is life after this life." And then he tests us, something directly to his audience, and he says something directly to us. "I tell you, use worldly wealth." Which is weird. Worldly wealth versus what? Like non-worldly wealth? Like space wealth, like whatever? Anyway, "I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves." To what? "Use worldly wealth, like the dishonest manager does, to gain friends for yourself, so that when it, the wealth, is gone, you'll be welcomed into eternal dwellings."

I say, "What?" So Jesus says, "Yeah, I want you to use what you have in such a way so that, when you die, when this life is over and you step into eternity, there will be people there who will welcome you because of what you did with what you had." Wow! God sees your money and my money—God sees your possessions and my possessions—as a tool. We ask the question, "What will I have to show for it? What will I have to show for it? What will I have to show for it?" Jesus asked a better question: "Who will you have to show for it?"

So here's the question, and then we'll move on. What do you have? And how can you use it? What do you have? How can you use it? And then here is the harder question: What do you have that can't be used?

Jesus isn't finished. He goes on. He says this, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much." Okay, that sounds like a Chinese proverb. Have we changed the subject again? He goes on, "And whoever is dishonest, whoever is dishonest with very little, will also be dishonest with much." The word “dishonest” literally means unrighteous, which in this context can mean untrustworthy. So he's saying, anybody who's untrustworthy with very little will also be untrustworthy with much. That is, they won't use it for the reason it was given to them. But what is he talking about? Then he goes on, "So," he says, "if you, if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth..." And there's that worldly wealth again. What other kind of wealth is there? In other words, "If you did not use worldly wealth for the reason and the purpose it was given to you, if you did not use worldly wealth for the reason and the purpose it was given to you, who..." he asks, "will trust you with true riches?"

Ah, now we're getting a clue, because now we have a contrast. We have worldly wealth. We all know what that is. And then there's true riches. What in the world is that? He says, "If you're not responsible with worldly wealth, who is going to entrust true riches to you?" But who is “who”? And what exactly are you talking about? And everybody leans in, because Jesus is the master teacher. And then he says, "And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?" And now it becomes a little bit more focused. Now it becomes a little bit more apparent what Jesus is saying. Jesus is saying, "Hey, your wealth, your money, your stuff is not only a tool; it's a test. Your stuff is a test."

We've all been given a little bit, and God is watching to see what we will do with the little bit he has put on loan to us, because it's not even ours. We leave it all here. And these are all according to the parable and what Jesus teaches. He's all given us—and this is really important, this is hard to believe. He's given all of us just a little bit. Now, you look at your little bit and you look at somebody else's little bit, and it seems like they have a lot bit. And you look at your a lot bit, and you look at somebody else's little bit and you go, "They only got a little bit." And God, from outer space, looks at our planet and he can barely see it from where he is. Just kidding.

The point is, from the perspective of eternity, ain't nobody got much. From the perspective of the God who created the universe and who is eternal, and those of us who get to live 80 or 85 years, no matter what you have or don't have. From the perspective of eternity, it all looks the same. It's just a little bit for a very short amount of time. And we've all been given a little bit to see how well we do. This is how God views your stuff and your money. This is how Jesus says your heavenly Father views your stuff and my stuff and our money. So we asked the question, and here's the point. How we manage what we assume is ours reflects our devotion to the one to whom it actually belongs. How we manage, because you're just managing it. You leave it all here, right? All that cool stuff that you've collected—you dust it and you insure it and you don't let anybody touch it. Then you die, and your kids get it. And they sell it, because they don't care.

So, how we manage what we assume is ours reflects our devotion to the one to whom it actually belongs. This is such a big deal, and if you're not a Christian, this may make you wanna second guess becoming a Christian. If you are a Christian, you need to know this if you don't. This was a theme of Jesus' ministry in his teaching. He taught more about this than heaven and hell. He taught more about this than salvation. Throughout his ministry, he taught that the people who are faithful with their earthly possessions will be rewarded in the life to come. And this is very uncomfortable for some people.

He taught consistently that people who are faithful with worldly wealth, with possessions in this life, would actually be rewarded in the life to come. And from this parable he gives us three things, and this is throughout Jesus' teaching. And I know this is uncomfortable, and if you're tempted to do this, don't cross your arms just yet. He says there's much riches, that's right out of the parable. He says there's genuine riches, worldly wealth versus true riches. And he says this, they're your riches. Everything that you manage, you're managing, you leave it here—it doesn't even belong to you. And Jesus said, your heavenly Father looks at the way you manage your little bit to determine if you can be trusted with more. That's what Jesus says. That's what God says about wealth and about money.

Now this is very uncomfortable for some people. And I've learned through the years, it is very motivating for others. Some people would say, "Well, Andy, I'm not generous because I want a reward in heaven. I'm generous because I just love God, and I'm grateful for what God has done for me." Hey, you go for it. You just be as generous as you can be. Other people are saying, "Are you kidding me? You mean I can make what's temporal, eternal? You mean I can send it on ahead? You mean the more generous, the more I can liquidate things here, that counts for heaven? That's motivating." I say, "Go for it." Because either way, your generosity... And here's what I want you to hear. Either way, your generosity matters. And it matters, Jesus says. Not me; I would never say this. Jesus says, "Your generosity matters beyond this life." Jesus is saying, "I'm just telling you how God sees it." Then he says this…this is the last thing. "No one..."—you've heard this before I bet—"no one can serve two masters. Either you'll hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other." And we're tempted to say, "Well, since this is like in the Bible and 'serve two masters,' he must be talking about God and Satan." Jesus is like, "No, it's not it. You cannot serve God and money."

And here's something God knows that you may just be about to discover, or maybe you kinda know but you don't wanna focus on it because it feels so bad. Did you know that God's chief competitor for your heart... God's chief competitor for your heart... If God wants all of your heart and your undivided attention, God's chief competitor for your heart, once you hit adulthood, is your money, your stuff, and the security that it represents? And so Jesus, who's so smart, says, "Look, I know how this goes. I know your heart. You cannot serve God and you can't serve money. You have to choose." And this is it. "When you begin to view your money and your wealth the way your heavenly Father does, it will free you to serve your heavenly Father with your whole heart." God sees the use of our money, how we use our money, as a trademark. That's the third thing. You know what a trademark is? A trademark is a device, some kind of device that communicates ownership. That how you spend and how you use your possessions and your money is a reflection, it's an indicator, of whose you truly are—what you do with what you have that signifies who you are.

What you do, what I do, with what you have, with what I have, signifies whose I am, whose you are. Now, Jesus finishes this parable. He's told the parable, and he's giving these takeaways, and he's made all these comments. And at the end of the parable... And this was no surprise. The text tells us, Luke, who thoroughly investigated all these things, Luke tells us that the Pharisees, who loved money, heard all of this and they were sneering at Jesus, like, "Ah, we shoulda left after that thing about the runaway kid. I mean, this is a total waste of our time. What do you mean, ‘this is how God…’ And, ‘trustworthy and eternal’? This is ridiculous." And Jesus sees them about to go, and he looks at them and he says to them, "You, you are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others." "When it comes to money and generosity," he says to them, and I think he says to us, "you are the ones who have this extraordinary potential to justify yourselves in the eyes of others."

"Well, I wish I could do more." "You know, I really wanna support the church but..." "Hey, I would give more but..." "You know, I wish we could do. But here's another..." And he says, "You are so good at talking yourself out of generosity. But do not be deceived; God knows your heart." Now, look up here. I'm almost done. Look. I've been doing this a long time, and I've been a Christian a long time. And I've had my own struggles in this area like everybody does. And here's what I absolutely know for a fact. Generosity, generosity is not a financial issue. It is not. Generosity has virtually nothing to do with your finances. Generosity has everything to do with your heart. Here's how I know that. Rich people are not generous. People with extra are not generous. Do you know who's generous? Generous people are generous. That's who's generous. And you've met some generous people, and some of them had almost nothing. Some of them had a little, some of them had middle, and some of them had a lot. And you've met some people who weren't generous, and some of them had a lot. And some of them were in the middle, and some of them had virtually nothing.

And Jesus, who knows our heart and who gets this, says to us, "Hey, the issue is not what you have and don't have. The issue is your heart." And he shouts to that group of religious leaders, "You can justify yourself all day long to all these people! But your wealth is a tool, your wealth is a test, and your wealth is a trademark." So, here's the takeaway: You, Christian or not, religious or not, have a limited amount of this. And you, Christian or not, religious or not, have a limited amount of this. In fact, I have more of this than any of you, because these are fake $100-dollar bills. And none of you have more fake $100-dollar bills than I do.

Okay, so here's the point. Here's the point. Here's the way that God sees your wealth and your money, everything that comes your way. Here's the way he sees it. You have a little bit of time, and you have a little bit of resources. You have a little bit of time, which means you have a little bit of opportunity. And all of your money and all of your possessions, and all of my money and all of my possessions, are a tool. And your heavenly Father is watching to see how much of this you are willing, how much of this I am willing, to turn into some form that helps other people. And it's a test. He's watching to see what all of us do with our little bit. Because, from his perspective, we all just have a little bit. And at the end of the day, what we do with this during this determines whose we truly are.

And here's what I know about you. This isn't in the Bible. This is just what we know about each other. When you get to the end of your life, you are not gonna wish you had given less and spent more. You're not. You're not gonna lay on your death bed and go, "Ah, if we'd only finished the basement. If we'd only built a bigger house. I should've bought the Corvette. All these years, man, here I am at the very end and I never..." Or whatever it is. We're not gonna get to the end of our life and wish, "Oh, I can't believe we were so generous. I have such regrets. I wish I could go back." You're not gonna wish you had been less generous and more of a consumer. You're not.

And here is the other thing I know about most of you, most of us. We are going to run out of this before we run out of this. Because we are shrewd when it comes to this world. We are not so shrewd when it comes to eternity. And so, consequently, we will run out of time before we run out of money, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. All I am saying is this. There is probably room for all of us to create more tools. There is room for all of us to be more trustworthy. And there is room for all of us to look in the mirror and say, "You know what? I may be able to convince everybody else, but if God knows my heart, based on my time and my money, whose am I really?" It's a tool, it's a test, it's a trademark. So use it well. Look for ways to use it up. It says something about you. And ultimately, Jesus says, it indicates whose you are.