

How should I spend my money? This is not as simple a question as it sounds. Sure, we could give a simple rule, but lacking any context it would fail to really inspire us. Money, it turns out, is not really a thing but a symbol. It is a symbol of productivity, a symbol of what you do with your life. Because of this, it turns out to be a big question, one that necessitates understanding why your life exists. Because God is a person and not a force, everything he does has a reason. All things, from stars to crickets were created for a purpose, and so were we. What is the purpose for all existence? Why are we here, and what should we do while we are here? What does it mean to live a good life? What should we do with what we have? All these questions are answered by understanding the reason God created everything. Finding out how we should use our money generously helps us answer lots of other questions.

Day 1

Glory of God

Verses: Psalm 8, John 14:1-14; John 9; John 8:1-11

Many people in the world are searching for the meaning of life. Most of those people are not very interested in who God is. We have the sense in the modern world that we can understand the meaning of life by looking at ourselves when in reality we must understand God and know who he is to understand ourselves. We were made in God's image, so if we want to understand what to do with our life and what it produces, we must understand who God is. Theology is the study of the nature of God, so we must all become amateur theologians if we want to understand who we are and how we should live, what we should produce and what we should do with what we produce. There is no other answer to these questions that bears any weight.

Day 2

Law of God

Verses: Proverbs 11:25; Proverbs 19:17; Proverbs 22:9; Matthew 25:44-45; Mark 10:21; Luke 3:10-11

When I was in late grade school and Jr. High I couldn't wait until summer. Summer in Colorado is where some of my best childhood memories reside, from rainbow trout fishing and camping with our boy scout troop to little league baseball and cool summer nights of hide and go seek. There was only one part of summer I dreaded: dandelions. My father's philosophy could best be summed up as, "why pay for weed spray when I have two kids." So, he would send my sister and I out most mornings with small knives in our hands to cut the dandelions out of the yard. Because they could grow faster than we could cut them out, it was a hopeless task. My father was trying to teach us to be productive and to face tasks that seemed hopeless forthrightly. Many times, the laws of our fathers can seem perplexing, frustrating, or even maddening. But if our fathers are good and wise, there is a reason for the rules. What are the laws of God regarding our productivity, our money, and our giving? Do you understand why they exist? What is the goal they are directing us to? How can we make sure that our attitude to those laws is reasonable? How do our lives in this area need to change so that we can be transformed by God into what he desires from us?

Day 3

Sin of Man

Verses: Galatians 5:19-21; James 1:14-15; Romans 6:12-14; Colossians 3:5-6

Although we were made in the image of God to rule in his name, we rebelled from that calling and decided to rule as we desired instead. The result has been a story of unending grief and horror for all

human history. Most of the time we are largely blind to the rebellion that is in our hearts. We think of people like serial killers, bank robbers and politicians as the real sinners while we are pretty good. In truth, our best moment of our best day is like a filthy rag in comparison to the righteousness and holiness of God. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus lays out the real requirements of the law, that is, the real standard of living like God. The most troubling part of this sermon for us is that Jesus extends the requirements of the law to our hearts. If we really want to live righteously, we must not only keep the law, but love it as enthusiastically as it deserves. We must worship and celebrate God as joyfully and fully as is warranted by the splendor of his majesty. We must embrace being productive and generous as wholeheartedly as God does. We all have sinned and have fallen short. Until we see the problem, we cannot begin to accept the solution to the problem. Our lack of productivity and generosity is not some small issue that a self-help book can address. It is a deep inward rebellion to the character and nature of God, and an affront to his name. What are the areas of your life where that rebellion still lurks? In what areas are you tempted to not be fully joyful? In what areas do you fail to trust fully in God's actions in the world? Spend some time today praying that God will reveal these areas to you so that you can fully worship and enjoy God.

Day 4

Salvation of God

Verses: Acts 2:38; Acts 4:8-12; John 14:6; John 3:16-18

In the garden Adam and Eve could not fully trust in God but were convinced by the devil that God's intentions toward them could not be trusted. From that moment until the birth of Christ no one who was ever born did any better. All the people who ever lived failed to see the glory of God fully, to take full joy in who He is and what He does, and to live completely obedient to His will. Because of this we could not become the glorious beings God had desired us to be. We fell short of his glory and the wages of this fall was death for us all. Jesus was born into the world and because of his perfect trust in the will of God and His joy in the glorification of God he was perfectly obedient and then was willing to impute that perfect obedience to us. Jesus was perfectly obedient, perfectly glorious, and perfectly loving toward us. Paul the Apostle writes about our salvation in two ways. First, we are justified by Christ having his righteousness imputed to us (credited to our account). Next, we are sanctified by the Spirit as we are transformed over time to become Christlike. Thus, Paul says, "follow me as I follow Christ". In order to be generous with others it is necessary for Paul for the Spirit to be transforming him into being like Christ. For Paul, his salvation is a necessary component of being able to share Christ's generous love with others. In the same way, we can only really share what we have received. If all we have is money, all we will give is money. But if we have been transformed by the love of Christ, we will have this love to share. This love may compel us to give our money, but that money will be accompanied by the love of Christ that has the power to transform lives. Have you accepted the saving grace found in Christ's new covenant? Are you being transformed by His love? If not, what is in the way? If you have not experienced the joy of salvation, pray for that today and consider speaking to one of the church leaders about how to make that real in your life.

Day 5

Call of God

Verses: Proverbs 31:8-9; Isaiah 58:6-7; Matthew 6:33-34; Mark 16:15

Many of us have had some form of vocational training. Most of us are probably unaware that vocation means calling. We have been called to glorify all the parts of creation that we have authority and control over. Most of us will spend our careers doing this for a paycheck, but there are many other ways to answer this call. The most important may be helping someone who is struggling to find meaning and purpose in their life to be transformed by Christ's love and to become glorious and productive blessing the world and others with the gifts and talents that God has given them. Who is in your life that you may be able to help? What opportunities do you have in your life to use the money God has blessed you with to help those in need? What other types of generosity may be necessary to help the money that you give be effective in producing change? What are the next steps in relationships, church, or your career that you could take to increase your fruitfulness or the fruitfulness of someone else? Who can you invest in and what kind of investment is necessary to help someone you know take the next step in their lives?