

I. Introduction

- a. Getting out of debt, getting on a budget, living on less than you make, saving, and giving allow you to start building some wealth. God's plan works! When you handle money God's ways and follow His principles, you get to experience His work in your life!
 - i. Again, it's not magic or prosperity theology.
 - ii. It's a matter of God using people who are open to handling His resources for His glory.

- b. But it also leads to a problem: When you build wealth, you open yourself up to criticism from people who think wealth is evil.
 - i. First of all, wealth provided by God can never be evil because He would never promote evil in the lives of His children.
 - ii. Next, if wealthy people are evil, we all are evil. Why?
 1. If you make \$34,000 a year, you are in the top 1% in terms of income in the world.
 2. If you make \$11,000 a year (which is below the lowest U.S. poverty threshold), you are still in the top 10% of the world.
 3. If you have a computer, a cell phone, a television, and a car, you're wealthy!
 - a. If wealth is evil, you have a problem!

- c. There are certain critical spirits in our culture that are twisting a biblical perspective on money and wealth. These toxic spirits want you to think that if you've experienced a measure of success you've done something wrong.
 - i. We will examine three spirits from the Bible's perspective. Two are unhealthy and toxic. The third represents the appropriate response to what God has given us.

II. The Spirit of Pride

- a. LEADER: Read Luke 10:38–42 and share the story of Martha—how she complained about working and how Jesus responded to her complaints.

- b. The spirit of pride says that wealth comes from hard work and is represented by Martha in Luke 10. She was busy with housework, even though God's Son was teaching in her living room.
 - i. It's all about me and what I can accomplish!

- c. A lot of us are like Martha. We are performance-based and like to quote verses that make our points for us.

- i. “If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10).
 - ii. “The hand of the diligent makes rich” (Proverbs 10:4).
 - iii. “To everyone who has, more will be given” (Matthew 25:29).
- d. Jesus told Martha to slow down and focus on what was really important—His presence and His teaching.
 - i. Like Martha, we can miss something important because we’re driven by performance. Our pride can distract us from receiving what Jesus wants to give us.
- e. How do we avoid the spirit of pride?
 - i. We must learn to display grace instead of being driven by performance.
 - ii. We need to slow down and sit at the feet of Jesus regularly.

III. The Spirit of Poverty

- a. LEADER: Read John 12:1–8 to set the context for both the spirit of poverty and the spirit of gratitude. Judas represents poverty in this story, while Mary represents gratitude.
- b. The spirit of poverty says that wealth comes from the devil and is represented by Judas in John 12.
 - i. It says money is evil and should be avoided at all costs!
- c. The spirit of poverty wants to make us feel guilty about doing things the right way and succeeding in life. It will judge our cars, our homes, and our possessions (“A Christian would never own anything that expensive.”).
 - i. It twists the Scriptures to make a case the Bible never makes.
- d. Historically, the spirit of poverty is rooted in the beliefs of the Gnostics.
 - i. The Gnostics were early church heretics who believed that everything physical was evil and everything spiritual was holy.
 - ii. But God made the physical, so it can’t be evil in itself.
 - iii. Physical things—including money—are amoral. How we use them determines right and wrong.
 - iv. Money isn’t the root of evil. The love of money is what leads us into all sorts of evil (1 Timothy 6:10).
- e. The spirit of poverty has two little sisters: envy and jealousy.
 - i. Jealousy says, “I want what you have.”
 - ii. Envy says, “I don’t think I can get what you have, so I don’t want you to have it either.”

- iii. If you see these attitudes taking root in your life, you are dealing with the spirit of poverty.
- f. How do we avoid the spirit of poverty?
 - i. Never take your theology lessons from the world. Learn your view about wealth from Scripture.
 - ii. Understand the difference between “fair” and “equal.”
 - 1. SPEAKER: Pro golfers can hit the ball farther than I can. NBA stars can shoot the ball better than I can. They can dunk the ball, and I can’t. Professional musicians can play instruments better than I can. They get paid more than I do . . . It’s not fair!
 - 2. In reality, it is fair. It’s just not equal. They get paid because they have a talent that is world-class. We can’t confuse the idea of what is fair with what is equal.
- g. Judas complained about Mary’s extravagant gift. In reality, his comments were motivated by greed because he was a thief, not because he cared about others.
 - i. The passage makes it clear that Judas only cared about the money. He was the treasurer in the group, but he was dishonest. He stole from the moneybag and used it for his own desires (John 12:6).

IV. The Spirit of Gratitude

- a. The spirit of gratitude recognizes that wealth comes from God and is represented by Mary in John 12.
 - i. It says, “What I have is not mine so I should be thankful!”
 - ii. SPEAKER: Point out that the spirit of gratitude reminds us that we are really like turtles on a fencepost. We didn’t get where we are on our own. God put us there, and we should respond to His work appropriately.
- b. Mary poured perfume that was worth a year’s wages on Jesus’ feet, and then wiped it up with her hair.
 - i. The average yearly income today is around \$50,000 . . . that’s a lot of perfume! The smell of that perfume probably filled the whole house. The neighbors may have even been able to pick up on the aroma of Mary’s sacrifice!
 - ii. But she understood that the spirit of gratitude requires us to live in a way that says, “Thank You, God.” It requires acts of worship for what He has done.
 - iii. Obedience, generosity and excellence are natural outcomes of the spirit of gratitude. They are offerings of worship we make to God because we are thankful.

- c. Pastor Robert Morris says, “It is not how much we have that matters, but whose it is that matters.”

V. Conclusion

- a. We get to choose which of the three spirits we embrace—a spirit of pride, a spirit of poverty or a spirit of gratitude. We can be Martha, Judas or Mary.
- b. The goal is to be Mary—to live a life that reflects our gratitude to God for what He has given us.