Faith Aflame: 360 Degrees

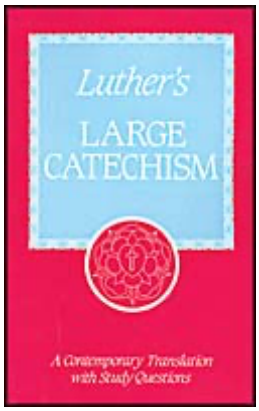
Living in God's Economy

Session Five – Part One

The Stewardship Life

Karl Kretzschmar

The First Commandment



Introduction: A Christian's stewardship is his/her life as a bond-servant of the Lord. (A bond-servant is one subject to the will and wholly at the disposal of another. Paul calls himself a bond-servant of Christ in Romans 1:1.) Our whole existence as Christian stewards is to be translated into the service of God, the Church, and the neighbor.

The motive and power to live life as a steward comes in the Gospel.

Karl Kretzschmar writes in *The Stewardship Life*,

> Appreciating with all his heart the liberty from sin, death, and damnation which his Savior purchased for him at the cost of His own life, the Christian feels that a whole lifetime of service will not repay even a part of that which God has given him as a free gift. He, therefore, is a good steward, not because he desires to win a reward, but because he considers himself under grateful and perpetual obligations to Him by whose mercy he has been blessed beyond measure. In other words, not what he hopes to possess, but what he already has, is the mainspring of his stewardship.

The purpose of module five is to help Christians understand their identity as steward and to grow in stewardship in all areas of life, especially when it comes to serving God, church, and neighbor with the financial resources entrusted to them.

There are, as a starting place, three things that can be said about Christian stewardship as it relates to money:

- The importance of receiving it gratefully.
- The importance of managing it faithfully.
- The importance of sharing it generously.

Bible Study:

Luke 18:18-30	"The Rich Young Ruler"
Luke 19:1-9	"Zacchaeus The Tax Collector"

Stewardship Questions:

1. What do we need to do?
2. What are we willing to do?

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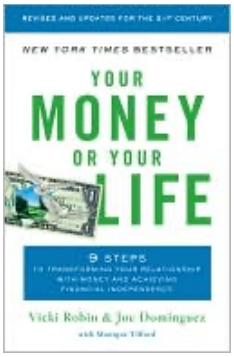
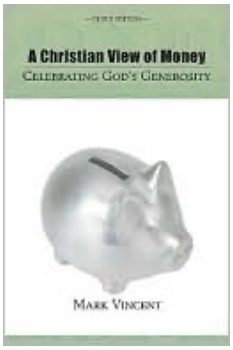
God's Servant





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The World's View of Money

In the book, *Your Money or Your Life*, authors Vicki Robin and Joe Dominquez sum up "the old road map" when it comes to material possessions:

> The landmarks of the old road map were clear: "nine to five till you're sixty-five"; trust in the company to take care of you in your old age; the United States is the world's greatest economic power and can do no wrong; we must push for a higher "standard of living" regardless of moral, ethical, emotional, cultural, spiritual, marital, environmental and political consequences.
>
> Around about the mid-twentieth century, though, conditions began to change. For many people, material possessions went from fulfilling needs to enhancing comfort to facilitating luxury—and even beyond to excess…Over time our relationship with money—earning it, spending it, investing it, owning it, protecting it, worrying about it—has taken over the major part of our lives….(And) most of us spend much more than 40 hours out of the week's total of 168 earning money…With all that time and money spent on and around our jobs, is it any wonder that we have come to take our identities from them? (Pages xxvi-xxvii.)

Martin Luther said, "The desire for riches sticks glued to our nature right up to the grave." *Luther's Large Catechism*. Page 14.

In *A Christian View of Money*, Mark Vincent says that because money has a godlike strength, our earning and use of money communicate our values. He suggests that money is godlike for seven reasons:

1. It outlives you.
2. Its circle of influence is greater.
3. Money is mysterious.
4. Money lives among the things we are tempted to worship.
5. Money mimics everything promised in the New Testament.
6. It is an instrument you wield.
7. Everything can be economized.

He concludes, "We dare not overlook this god-like power of money. Dreaming about making a fortune replaces prayer and devotion to God. Believing it fixes what we think is wrong grants it god-like power over our souls…We hold this god-like thing in our hands. In choosing our intentions for money—whether good or bad—we must first decide whether or not money will rule us." (Page 22-23.)

What is the difference between a secular worldview and a Christian worldview?