

# RESOURCEFULNESS vs. WASTEFULNESS

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## ***INCREASING ASSETS BY SEEING VALUE IN WHAT OTHERS OVERLOOK OR DISCARD.***

*“Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished; but he that gathereth by labour shall increase.” Proverbs 13:11*

### **DEFINITION OF RESOURCEFULNESS**

A resource is an asset available for anticipated needs. The Biblical concept of resourcefulness revolves around gathering: “Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished; but he that gathereth by labour shall increase” (Proverbs 13:11). In this verse, the Hebrew word for gather is *qabats* (*kaw-BATS*), and literally means “to grasp” or “to collect.” Another Hebrew word for *gather* is *agar* (*aw-GAR*) and means “to harvest.” “He that *gathereth* in summer is a wise son; but he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame” (Proverbs 10:5). Solomon also exhorts the sluggard to consider the ant who “Provideth her meat in the summer, and *gathereth* her food in the harvest” (Proverbs 6:8).

Resourcefulness means finding practical uses for things that others would overlook or discard. God offers the ultimate example of resourcefulness in the great value He places on each person, and the loving diligence He exerts to “seek and to save” that which is lost. (See Luke 19:10.)

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF RESOURCEFULNESS**

Resourcefulness leads to the increase of your net worth. You must not seek more assets simply to heap up treasures for yourselves, but rather to increase your ability to give to others. “That ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work” (II Corinthians. 9:8). When you give away assets in times of plenty, you will have what you need in times of want. (See II Corinthians 8:14.)

In Matthew 25:14-30, the Lord Jesus tells the parable of the talents. This parable forms part of Jesus’ teaching known as the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24:3-25:46). He gives this discourse in response to the question of His disciples concerning the events that will lead up to Christ’s return, and the end of the age. The believer properly responds to the signs of Christ’s coming by keeping alert, and by utilizing assets that others would overlook or discard (Matthew 24:42-44). The faithful and wise servant carefully utilizes the assets of food and stores entrusted to him by his master to provide for his subordinates (Matthew 24:45-51). The wise virgins carefully utilize the oil entrusted to them to last until the arrival of the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13). And in the parable of the talents, the good and faithful servants carefully utilized the money entrusted to them by their master to invest in his absence (A *talent* refers to a measure of weight, between 58 and 80 pounds, used in measuring either silver or gold.)

14 "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. 15 To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. 16 The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. 17 So also, the one with the two talents gained two more.

18 But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

19 "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.'

21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

22 "The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.'

23 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

24 "Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

26 "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? 27 Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. (Matthew 25:14-27, New International Version).

Preeminently, Christ teaches the disaster of wasted opportunities. Along the way, He makes some powerful points that apply to resourcefulness:

- Notice that the master chose to entrust different assets to each of the servants. A good and faithful servant with one talent of money will not wait until he has ten talents of money before utilizing the asset at his disposal. Resourceful people think in terms of percentages. For example, buying a can of food for eight cents, rather than ten cents, is not simply saving two cents. It is saving 20 percent! You might expect that the servant with the largest number of talents faced the biggest temptation to waste assets. But ironically, the servant with the fewest talents proves the most careless.
- Notice that even though the master gave each servant different amounts of money, he gave each servant the same amount of time. Recall Ephesians 5:15-16, "See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." Lord Chesterfield sagely remarked, "Take care of the minutes; the hours will take care of themselves." The resourceful person will regularly ask himself, "What does God want me to do right now?"
- Notice that the master distributed assets according to the ability of each servant. The good and faithful servant does not complain about the assets that his master has withheld from him. Instead, he gives thanks that the master has not burdened him with more responsibility than he can handle!

## **HOW GLEANING LAWS EMPHASIZE RESOURCEFULNESS**

When God designed laws, statutes, and judgments for the nation of Israel, He made provisions for "social welfare." The Law stated, "And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather every grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I am the LORD your God," Leviticus 19:9-10. Moses declared in Deuteronomy 24:19-22,

19 When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

20 When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

21 When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

22 And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

God made assets available for the needs of the poor, the orphaned, the widow, and the alien. However, these folks needed to exercise resourcefulness in doing the work of gathering these resources. Ruth showed resourcefulness after arriving in Bethlehem with Naomi (Ruth 2). She volunteered to glean, and God abundantly supplied for her and her mother-in-law.

## **HOW LIFE WAS PRESERVED THROUGH RESOURCEFULNESS**

**During the Flood** - After God determined to judge the world with a flood, He instructed Noah to build an ark in order to preserve his family and all the creatures that could not swim. In addition to preparing the space needed to house the animals, Noah and his family had to demonstrate resourcefulness to gather the food that was needed to survive: "And of every living thing of all flesh, two of every sort shalt thou bring into the ark, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. ... And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them," (Genesis 6:19,21).

**During a Famine** - The Bible offers another excellent example of resourcefulness in the preparation made for a famine during the days of Joseph. Through a dream, God warned Pharaoh that He would send seven years of abundant harvest followed by seven years of famine. Joseph designed a resourceful plan to prepare for the famine: “And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.” (Genesis 41:35-36).

**During Economic Hardship** - Harsh economic conditions in Jerusalem made destitute a great many believers. The Apostle Paul asked for help from churches in Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia. He urged the Corinthians to show resourcefulness by gathering a portion of their assets on a regular basis: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem,” (I Corinthians 16:1-2).

## THE POWER BEHIND RESOURCEFULNESS

As wise and creative gathering increases resources, you may face the temptation to take the credit for the added wealth. Therefore, you must continually remind yourself that it is God “that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18). “Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning,” (James 1:16-17).

## THE THREEFOLD PROCEDURE TO GATHER RESOURCES

God uses physical needs to motivate you to maintain a daily dependence upon Him. Therefore, the Lord Jesus instructs you to pray “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). He says in Matthew 7:7-8, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” Christ established a threefold procedure to gain resources in answer to prayer:

1. **Ask and receive**—Acknowledge your dependence on God in humble prayer. Through prayer, you profess your submission to the only One who can cause all things to work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose, (Romans 8:28). You can do more than pray, but you shouldn’t do anything until you have prayed. Psalm 37:4 reads, “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.” In prayer you delight yourself in the Lord, giving up to Him your plans and desires, and in exchange He gives you those desires that He wants you to have. Therefore, the Apostle John writes, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him,” (1 John 5:14-15). When you ask God for needed resources, He promises to provide them for you. However, in order to get them, you must take the next two steps.
2. **Seek and Find**—Diligently seek out that which He has given, even though God has already given that for which you have asked. This will require insight, initiative, and creativity. Many people ask God for things and are given them, but they never seek and knock. Thus, they conclude that God did not hear or answer their prayer! God may not provide the resource for which you have prayed in the way you think. The Lord says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts,” (Isaiah 55:8-9).  
God so works that you will pursue Him. Consider Jeremiah 29:11-13, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart,” and Psalm 42:1, “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.” You need to “look around,” remembering that God delights in doing things in unexpected ways.
3. **Knock and open**—Make contact with the people involved when you believe you have found God’s provision. By explaining to them your goals and how God previously led you, you can then see whether God has prepared their hearts to complete the acquisition of the resource.

## **HOW RESOURCEFUL ARE YOU?**

1. Do you keep accurate records of the resources God has given you?
2. Would God take pleasure with the way you use the assets He has given to you?
3. Have you searched out valuable resources that others are discarding?
4. What motivates you to increase your assets: a desire to have more to give away, or a desire to heap up these assets for your own security?
5. Have you asked God for things and expected Him to give them to you without seeking and finding them?
6. Have you multiplied the value of your assets, or has their value been eaten up with depreciation, rust, and moths?