

I. Introduction

- A. Before we get into our IGNITE topic today, I want to set it up with a three questions.
- B. These questions are about you and one of your key relationships. For some, this might be really positive, for some this might be negative and even painful. I feel it with you. So here we go.
- C. Think back on your relationship with your father. Your childhood relationship, or non-relationship, with your father, or whatever man came closest to rearing you.
- D. First question is about the health of that relationship. Was it more toward the dysfunctional side, or more toward the functional side?
 1. Remember your answer... dysfunctional or functional.
 2. And yes, it might have been mixed, the best of times and the worst of times. But pick a leaning... dysfunctional or functional.
 - a) *Relationship: functional/dysfunctional*
- E. Question two is about emotion. There are four to pick from: mad, sad, glad, and scared. When you think about your childhood relationship with your father, is your emotion mainly mad, sad, glad, or scared?
 1. So two words so far... One for health... dysfunctional or functional.
 2. And one for emotion... mad, sad, glad, or scared.
 - a) *Emotion: mad, sad, glad, scared*
- F. Question three is about power. When you think of your relationship with good old dad, which word fits best: victim, ignored, empowered.
 1. *Power: victim, ignored, empowered*
- G. So you have three words. A relationship word, an emotion word, and a power word.
 1. Functional, glad, empowered.
 2. Dysfunctional, mad, ignored.
 3. Dysfunctional, scared, victim.
- H. Three words.
- I. Hold onto those three words for a bit.

II. Ignite

- A. On October 1, we started a new fall series called IGNITE.
 1. The literal definition: to cause something to catch fire.
 2. The non-literal, metaphorical definition: to cause something to catch fire. Or, to create excitement, arouse the passions, and provoke the soul.
 - a) That is my goal for this series. That is my goal for your life. That all the grace we've been laying in your heart and mind would catch fire.
- B. In that first message, I shared this Scripture with you:
 1. *Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:12-14)*
 2. This talks about striving, straining like a runner at the tape, pressing toward the goal for the prize.
- C. I gave the main idea that's really driven this whole series. Which is this:
 1. *The main reason we are not experiencing God's best is because we are willing to settle for less.*
- D. Yes, it's one of "those" series.
- E. So we have talked about:
 1. Ignite with Grace
 2. Ignite your Love
 3. Ignite your Family
 4. Ignite your Friendship
 5. Ignite your Fellowship (evangelism)
 6. Ignite your Forgiveness
 7. Ignite your Fearlessness
 - a) and our topic for today...
 8. Ignite your Finances.

III. Scripture:

- A. *Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. Honor the LORD with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine. (Proverbs 3:5-10)*
- B. Think with me please on the topic:

IV. God's Laws of Financial Freedom

- A. **THE LAW OF RELATIONSHIP:**
What you have with money is a relationship. (Matthew 6:24)
 1. *"No one can fully serve two masters. He is bound to hate one and love the other, or be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and the power of money. (Matthew 6:24, Phil).*
 2. Money is a like a person, and you relate to it like a person. You love it, you hate it, you miss it, you long for it. Like a husband loves a wife. Like a boyfriend loves a girlfriend. Like a mom loves her children.
 3. Like Gollum loves his ring.

4. What you have with money is a relationship. You don't just "have" money or not have money. You *relate* to money in certain ways, and those ways will either make your life great or make your life miserable. And that relationship with money infects every other relationship in your life too.
5. So, say hi to Money.
6. Hi Money, my name is Bill. How's it going?

B. **THE LAW OF INTERVENTION:**

Apart from deliberate intervention and growth, you will pattern your relationship with money after the relationship you had with your earthly father growing up. (Hebrews 13:5)

1. *Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." (Hebrews 13:5, NIV).*
2. Because that first relationship sets the pattern for all your other relationships. When you were a really little kid, you learned how to relate. You were given a template, a pattern, a mold for relating. Your mom and dad taught you that. And if you had more than one mom or dad in your growing up years, all that gets sprinkled into the ingredients of how you form attachments.
3. Your parents taught modeled relationships for you.
4. And all your other relationships get fit into this mold.
5. Your marriage relationship. Your dating relationships. Your parenting relationships. Your work relationships. And your money relationship. It all fits into this mold.
6. I asked you to think of three words to describe your relationship to your father growing up.
7. Recall those three words.
8. Now ask yourself this question: how well do those three words describe your relationship with money? Are they pretty close?
9. The insecurities planted early in your childhood take root, and invade every other relationship in your life.
10. Unless... and thank God there's an unless...
11. Unless the grace of God intervenes, and that is exactly God's plan for your life. A grace intervention that sets all your relationships on a whole new course.
12. However messed up your father might have been, you have a new father who comes in to say, "*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.*"
13. God intervenes. God sets up a new template for you. You can trust him. You can be vulnerable with him. You can let down your guard. He won't mess with you. He won't ignore you. He won't let you down.
14. We're talking about igniting your finances, and I'm just suggesting it's more than dollars and cents. It's goes way deep into your root emotions and the deepest part of your heart.
15. You have to let God into your finances more deeply than ever before.

C. **THE LAW OF BLESSING:**

If you elbow God out of your finances, you're settling for less than the maximum experience of blessing in your life.

1. *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:10, NIV)*
2. I grew up in a household where mom and kids went to church and dad did not.
3. My dad, a good old Italian tough guy, dropped me off for Sunday School and church, and picked me up when it was over. My little church was a second family to me.
4. One day, two of my church leaders visited my house. Back in the day, that was something church people were supposed to do... house to house visitation to share the gospel.
5. I was maybe ten or eleven years old.
6. I knew why they came... they came to share Christ with my dad.
7. So Paul and Ben sat at the dining room table with my Dad and my mom. I watched from the kitchen.
8. A couple of minutes into the conversation, my dad turned to me, caught my eye, smiled, and made this motion (he held out his hand, palm up, and rubbed his fingers together).
9. He figured all they wanted was money.
10. That's not why they came, but that's what he assumed. That's a chronic complaint of unchurched people — all they want is my money. I'm sorry to say, that is the case in too many churches. I hope you don't feel that way about Neighborhood...
11. If you think all we want is your money, you're thinking too small. We want your whole heart... for God's embrace, God's salvation, God's love, God's Word, and the maximum experience of God's incredible, matchless, perfect, life-changing, truly amazing grace.
12. If you elbow God out of your finances, you pierce yourself with many griefs, the Bible says. You might be very, very wealthy, but your wealth won't satisfy.
13. Your dysfunctional relationship with many colors every other relationship you know.
14. The law of blessing says God has already blessed you, in Christ. You are the richest person you know. You are the most blessed person you know. God has heaped a rich treasure upon you. You have blessings for every moment, every need, every problem, every worry you have. You are graced out, to the max, from the moment of your salvation.
15. Now, the rest of your life is not about GETTING blessings. It's about EXPERIENCING the blessings you already have. Possessing your possessions, as the old timers used to say.
16. No matter how much money you have or don't have, you can live a God-blessed life.
17. That will ONLY happen when you follow God's wisdom on money and wealth.
 - a) Because that is how you experience maximum blessing in your life.
 - (1) Because that is how you find a happiness money can't buy.

D. THE LAW OF THE OFFERING PLATE:

Support with your finances the church that feeds your spirit.

1. Every time the offering plate goes by, I hope you think of this verse:
2. *Remember this--a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. Don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully. And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. (2 Corinthians 9:6-8, NLT).*
3. I want you to know something about Neighborhood. We are very careful with the money given to us. Here are some facts you might not be aware of.
 - a) We do not spend more money than we take in.
 - (1) If we budget to receive so much money, and that money doesn't come it, our budget shows a deficit. We didn't receive as much money as we expected.
 - (2) But when that happens, we stop spending. We try to be wise with our money.
 - (3) When we opened the doors to this new worship center, we had already saved up two years worth of mortgage payments in reserve.
 - (4) We have built up a reserve to just about what most experts suggest churches should have.
 - (5) But we're really serious about everything that comes in.
 - b) BUDGET. We establish a budget based on last year's total giving.
 - (1) Our budget for this past year, 2016 was \$2.8 million.
 - (2) But what actually came in was \$2.6 million. So that's how much we spent, even though we budgeted to spend more.
 - (3) Our budget for this coming year, 2017 is \$2.675 million. It's lower than last year's budget but higher than last year's giving by \$75k.
 - (4) We have a governing board that oversees all of this, and uses standard bookkeeping practices. Every month, we review our finances with our treasurer. We keep close tabs on giving and spending.
 - c) SALARIES. You should also know about how we set our salaries. There are in depth studies made across the nation on ministerial salaries. For every job, every position in the church, we can study out the national averages. Those averages are adjusted. They are adjusted for...
 - (1) What part of the country we're in.
 - (2) For educational attainment.
 - (3) For seniority and experience.
 - (4) For value to the overall church.
 - (a) We do reviews. We keep an eye on trends. And we keep our pastoral and staff salaries in line with national ranges. We don't just make stuff up.
 - (b) This is a great place to work, as long as you do your job well and work hard. If not, it's a rough place to work.
 - (c) We've had seasons when our staff has gone up to three years without raises. We stay on budget, and do our jobs with joy.
 - d) GREAT COMMISSION FUND. You should also know that we are part of a larger family of churches called The Alliance. Two thousand churches in the United States. Of 2,000 churches, when it comes to giving to world missions... called the Great Commission fund, we are number 27...
 - (1) About a quarter million dollars goes to helping people find and follow God from all of you who give. Thank you.
 - (2) This is how we support missionaries and international workers all around the world.
 - e) GIVING. We had 1,400 families or singles give at least one time to Neighborhood last year. We are thankful for every one, and every dime.
 - f) GENEROSITY. We are also one of the most generous churches in town for helping our church family in time of financial need... but we don't talk about that very much, because we don't want to boast, and because we don't want a line around the parking lot.
 - (1) When we do help people with financial need, we have a very strong system for doing that. We meet with them, do our homework, and provide counseling to move forward in their lives.
 - g) CONVERSIONS. One more thing. Most churches in America see somewhere between zero and five people get saved during the year.
 - (1) In the last two years, the number of people who received Jesus as Savior at Neighborhood is 824.
 - h) If you're part of this incredible family of faith called Neighborhood, you're part of something special. Don't take it for granted. And don't think that somebody else will pay the bill. We have no heavy hitters at our church. Nobody's writing six figure checks and holding our budget up.
 - (1) Part of me wishes it were so.
 - (2) But another part of me sees God's wisdom in this. We have to trust him. We have to pray. We have to respect every dime God gives us, and squeeze it as hard as we can to help more and more people find and follow God.
4. When my dad assumed that the church was all about money, and all about getting rich, he had a really common attitude. He would have been very very wrong about our church.
5. When your relationship with God crowds out your dysfunctional relationship with your earthly father in the past... that's when you become a cheerful giver. That's when you really believe God will supply all your need.
6. And that's when your relationship with money becomes... for the first time ever... normal.
7. That offering plate is a gift of potential health for you.
8. We want to help IGNITE health into your finances. So we have four action steps, but I'm going to save them for the very end.

E. THE LAW OF FUTURE GRACE:

Past tense grace is God's absolute guarantee of future tense grace tomorrow and forever.

1. *"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19, 20, NKJV).*
2. This is a verse every kid in church learns, and every adult forgets.
3. Imagine what that looks like. Laying up treasures in heaven. We know what laying up treasure on earth looks like. Saving wisely. Investing wisely. Living within your means. We get the earthly picture.
4. But what about the heavenly picture?
 - a) It's something eternal... it's in heaven.
 - b) It's something indestructible... beyond rust, decay and, theft.
 - c) It's a treasure money can't buy and bankers can't repossess.
5. What does it mean to lay up treasures in heaven?
6. It means to get your heart right with God. That's the next verse:
 - a) *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21, NKJV).*
7. It's back where we started. Back to your relationship with your heavenly father. To lay up treasures in heaven is to wake up every morning to a father who takes care of you.
 - a) You can be secure, he will protect.
 - b) You can be confident, he will provide.
 - c) You can be courageous, he will supply.
 - d) You can be at peace, he will win in the end.
8. When your father in heaven is closer to you than your money on earth, every act of faith is another treasure you lay up for yourself in heaven.
 - a) Especially faith when faith makes no sense.
 - b) Praying when praying makes no sense.
 - c) Giving when giving makes no sense.
 - (1) There's your treasure.
9. I wonder what it will look like in heaven, when we step into that treasure...into that full inheritance.
10. Most Christians don't realize that heaven will be exceedingly unequal. Some here will be driving around heavenly Maseratis. Others will be pedaling Big Wheels.
11. And it has nothing to do with how rich you were on earth.
12. It is everything to do with your heart's relationship to God... which money always tries to usurp.
13. If God sent Jesus to die for your sins, won't he provide for everything else?
 - a) *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? (Romans 8:32, NKJV).*

V. Equipping you for financial health

- A. I have four ways to help Ignite your giving.**
1. Financial Peace University (FPU)... this is a 9 week class on getting your finances in order, and there's a table in the lobby to find out more. Sundays.
 2. Finances Beyond the Budget. This is one session, to equip you to be wise with your money. It is happening in December.
 3. Understanding College and University Financial Aid. Saturday, December 3 at 6:30 pm.
 4. Automate Your Giving... you can set this up online, or in the lobby today. And take a huge step forward in your relationship with both money and God... and you can help our church grow in its mission of helping people find and follow God.

VI. Ignite Wake Up Call

- A. Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give generously to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of real life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19, NLT).**