

**Sermon Study Guide Based on  
Pastor Glen Weber's Message of January 3, 2010  
"Managing Jesus' Resources"**

**[We need to think about all the blessings that God has given us, and how we manage them.]**

**[Topics: Resources; Wise Stewardship; the Environment; 2010 Theme]**

**Excerpt:** It's appropriate as we start the New Year by thinking about the resources God has given us. This morning over at Fair Oaks gives you a dose of reality, because the average age over there is about 85 or 90. And one of the ladies, who is 93, said that she had a lot of blessings to be thankful for.

You know God has given us a lot. And as we think about managing our resources, we're not just talking about money, but all the things God has given us. Now money is obviously one of the issues. Some of you may know that Pastor Rick Warren sent out an urgent letter to his church for \$900,000 before the end of the year!

Now pastor Glen's heart bled for Pastor Rick! He urgently needs 4 times our total income just to break even for this year! Now we (New Hope) hit budget and our expenses were under budget. So we put a little money into reserves. Praise God for that.

Now Rick Warren announced that they had received this past week \$2.4 million and that's not counting what came in the mail. So people stepped up and they now have some reserves already for this coming year.

There are probably one or two of you here today who would have liked to sent out a letter to all your friends and family and say, "I need some extra money this last week of the year to break even. I had some bills this year I didn't quite get covered."

Now we didn't have anyone we can send that letter to, do we? Now maybe your kids, if you've got a really good relationship with them. But for most of us, we don't have anyone we can send that letter to. You and I have to live within what we have.

Sadly our governments are not doing a very good job of that. Every one of our governments is in hock. They're in debt. They're going broke. All of our paychecks went down this month, because we get the opportunity to loan more money to California each pay period. They're taking IOUs from you and me. And they say they are going to pay it back in April. Yea, right – with the money they don't have.

So, resources are important issues, aren't they, as we think about life and spend things? All of us would love to make an urgent plea for our bank balances. And governments at all levels aren't setting an example.

Now the savings rate in America has gone up this past year, thanks to the financial crisis. And the government officials are kind of grumbling about it, because they don't want you saving, they want you spending, because the more you spend, the more tax money they get. They don't want you to save, because when you save, you get rich, not them.

And so we struggle sometime as to how we are going to survive. Hopefully some of us have a buffer so that we literally don't starve to death if we miss a paycheck. But life is kind of challenging sometimes. And many people do live check to check and when they don't make it, they put it on their credit card. So they are now spending more than they got.

So let's say you have a crisis, because your car breaks down and you need a \$1000 to repair it. And so you put it on your credit card and you begin to pay off that credit card at the minimum balance. Before you had to pay 3% of your balance and some of them have reduced that to 2%, so that you could afford to make your payment. But it's done actually to make the bank richer.

So just paying the minimal balance on your credit card, how long do you think it will take you to pay it off that \$1000? One member in the congregation guessed 12 years. Another one said, "Never."

Now most experts say, depending on the interest rate on your credit card, it will take you approximately 30 years to pay off that \$1000 debt. If the rate is higher, it will take you 50 years, because there is so little of your payment going on the principle and so much more going on the interest.

That's why our government wants us to keep going into debt, because that interest keeps the whole process going. So that's not a wise way to live. So, please don't just pay your minimum payment, or you're never going to pay it off. It's a gimmick by the banks and credit card companies to get very, very wealthy.

Pastor Glen then asked a couple of teens – Chris and Jed – to come and help him do a little test. Let's say that Chris, when he's 19, starts to save \$2000 a year. And he saves until he's 28. That's about 10 years. So he saves about \$20,000. Jed will start saving when he's 27 and he will save until he's 65.

Who at the end will have the most money? Chris will and don't forget that he won't save anything after he's 28. This is based on a 12% return per year. Chris would have \$2.2 million. Now Jed saves his whole life starting at age 27 and assuming a 12% return, he will have \$1.5. Now that's not too shabby.

But Jed had to save \$80,000 over that time period and Chris only had to save \$20,000. Now put yourself in our boat, where many of us are thinking that we're going to retire in 10 years or so. So how do we have to save in this scenario? About four times our salary.

So resource management is important. And it's important that we teach it to our young people and to each other. But unfortunately our young people think they need to spend money like mom and dad and have all the goodies they have – now, instead of waiting.

Of course, Christians and the environment are a big issue right now. We just had our President go over to Copenhagen and it turned out to be a big fiasco. But, unfortunately, Christians are known typically, especially evangelical Christians, to be against the environment. Well, that shouldn't be.

We should be the people for the environment. But we're not necessarily for the government fixing things. And so we run into the political side of how do we deal with environmental issues.

And of course there is the theological side. There are a lot of Christians out there believe we shouldn't even worry about the environment, because Jesus is going to return right away and it's all going to get obliterated anyway, so what's the point? But that's bad theology. That's wrong theology. That idea is based on a heresy.

Actually, our physical environment – including our money and all our physical blessings are important to God and he cares how we manage them.

In the first part of **Romans 8**, Paul writes about the Spirit of God coming to dwell in us. And how we don't live by the flesh anymore nor by the carnal mind but by the Spirit of God. And how the Spirit of God is transforming us and changing us. And it's drawing us into a relationship with him. And it's making us Christ-like. That's the background to these verses.

**18) "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."** So we shouldn't consider the present stuff we are going through. We went through a lot in 2009.

If you had listened to the commentators just before New Year's eve, many of them said that we don't want to go through another year like 2009. There were all kinds of suffering last year.

Part of the management of our resources is allowing God's glory to show through us now by how we take care of things as well as our finances.

**19) The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.** The whole creation is waiting for God to reveal what he has planned to do and how he's going to work it all out.

**20) For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it,** While the creation was put in frustration by God, he didn't intend it that way. When God put Adam and Eve in the Garden, he told them to "**dress and keep it.**" In other words, to dress it up.

Now because they fell and turned away from God, what was the curse put on Adam? God cursed the ground and there were weeds and thistles. In other words, humanity had to earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. It was going to be hard work, especially with all these weeds.

So God put the creation into this frustrating state of decay because of Adam's sin. Now since God has restored us to a relationship with him, where we can now experience the "Tree of Life," he expects us to help the creation to mature and grow and to look after the things God

has given us. Now some of us do a great job with that and others of us don't do such a good job. And you know that when you don't, it costs you more in the long run.

Pastor Glen grew up on a farm. And they had neighbors who really didn't like to farm. They only got rid of weeds when they had to. And they didn't take care of a lot of their crops. Now Glen's grandfather loved to farm. And once the weeds started coming up, they were out there with their tractor getting rid of them.

You don't let weeds grow, because they suck the moisture from the ground and they go to seed and spread more weeds. Pastor Glen spent hours hand picking out weeds from the crops.

So it's a choice, isn't it, of how we want to take care of our personal resources. Whether we are going to keep up our place or let it run down. Whether we are going to take care of things like our automobiles. If you don't change your oil once in a while, you will be doing a motor job. And it's going to cost you a whole bunch of money, because you didn't do those \$30 oil changes. Since the creation is subject to frustration, it all runs down if it isn't maintained or taken care of.

**"in hope 21) that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God."** Now we've already been brought into the freedom of God. So how do you think we should act towards the things that God gives us and toward his creation? Sometimes we do a disservice toward the creation and we don't even realize it.

The Weber's daughter-in-law got a treadmill for Christmas and it came in this huge box. And it's sitting in the living room. And in the other room are the toys that their two grandchildren received. And what do you think their granddaughter was playing with – the box of course. It was her imaginary boat that was floating in the lake. She had her grandparents and other relatives from time to time sit in the boat with her. And the toys she could care less about.

Isn't that how life is like? We get all this stuff and then we have to figure out where we are going to put it and then maintain it.

**22) "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time."** It's true. There is global warming. And there's also global cooling – and everything in between. And that's because the creation is subject to futility and is groaning. The warming and cooling has got very little to do with what we are doing.

That's just how it is. But, nevertheless, we should be doing what we can. If we take care of the little bit of environment that God has given you and me, that makes the place a little better. But, unfortunately, people like to play politics with those things.

What so interesting is that when you see the quotes from people who are talking about global warming, they were the same people we quoted in the *Plain Truth* magazine in 1968 and 1969 who were talking about us entering into the next ice age with the oceans freezing.

And these are the same scientists who are now saying that we are going to melt and the oceans are going to rise and we will all drown. But now the temperature has gone down the

past 10 years. We don't know which way the temperature will go. But it doesn't matter. What matters is that we take care of what God has given us.

**23) "Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."** While we are participating with God now, we are still waiting for the more that is yet to come and the redemption of our bodies. Our soul has been redeemed. Jesus took care of that 2000 years ago.

And Jesus also reconciled the whole cosmos. But there is still a redemption process still happening. Our bodies aren't redeemed yet. It's still decaying. We notice that every day a little bit more. But, God will redeem our bodies. So these senior years are not the "golden years"; they are yet to come. As glorified flesh, we will then truly experience the "golden years."

In the future, God will put our redeemed soul with our redeemed bodies. And we will live for eternity as a glorified human being. How good of news is that, as God invites us to walk with him?

**24) "For in this hope we were saved."** The reason we should look after the things we've been given and live a life that Christ would have us live is the hope we have.

**"But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has?"** Now for those of us sitting in church today, we don't have to hope that we make it church. Now we might have to hope that we make it next week. So hope is something we don't yet have but are looking forward to.

**25) "But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."** Even as we struggle along in this life, we have to patiently wait for the time when God will bring restoration.

So now we, as individuals in this congregation, need to ask God, what has he given us? Now, God has given all of us talents. One of the resources God has given us is a talent. It might be a writing talent, it might be an artistic talent, a music talent, etc.

How are you stewarding that talent? Sometimes, we put a talent on the shelf that God has given us. And God has given all of us spiritual gifts. Are we walking with God and asking him to help us see what it is?

In the opening prayer, pastor Glen prayed that God would help us, as New Hope, see what it is that he has planned in advance for us to do – so that we can hear him and respond to those things.

Pastor Glen is working with our leadership on our theme for 2010. This is a temporary draft – "Moving step by step closer to the heart of Jesus."

It's to become more and more like Jesus every day and moving step-by-step closer. Now that doesn't just mean us. We should be moving ourselves and everyone else we know or come in contact with, one step closer to Jesus. Just one step. We don't have to get them "saved." We just have to move them one notch closer to Jesus.

For example, pastor Glen has been thinking about how he could move his sons one notch closer to Jesus. One of his sons has a whole bunch of friends in their late 20's and early 30's who have small children like he and his wife do. So pastor Glen made the suggestion that his son ought to start a house church and he would help his son organize it and get started. His son said, "That's an interesting thought."

All pastor Glen wanted to do was to plant a seed – to give him a nudge. So that's what we want to do as members of our congregation – to help move everyone one step closer. We also need to take care of all the resources that God has given us including the environment and our finances. Take that one step close to the heart of Jesus as to how he would want you to live. Moving family and friends to Jesus. Just nudge them a little.

Is there a way spiritually that we can move one step closer to Jesus this year? If you haven't been spending time in God's word, spend a little time there. Several years ago, pastor Glen started reading through the Bible every year.

There are many devotionals that have you read Scriptures from both the Old and New Testament every day. Today he read Genesis 6-8 and Matthew 3. Every year, pastor Glen picks a new translation. This year he is reading from *The Message Bible*.

Spiritually: Just this week, pastor Glen read an interesting quote about spiritual growth. It said, "Many Christians go from diapers to Depends." Some Christians have never grown up spiritually – they've just gotten older. We should want a spiritually vibrant, active relationship with God.

Emotionally: Maybe you had a hard year. Are we doing things to become more dependant on Jesus and less reactionary to our circumstances? Are we walking a little closer to Jesus doing our crisis?

Financially: Are we managing our money? Are we getting out of debt? If anything should have taught us this last year is that debt is bad in most cases. We need to get out of debt. We need to be saving. We need to be managing. If you are overwhelmed, there are ways of getting out of your situation. There are things you can do.

And what is New Hope's responsibility? We have a responsibility to move our community one step closer to Jesus. Hopefully we can do that. Hopefully we can find ways to move the whole community closer to Jesus Christ's heart. Hopefully we can ways to connect with them and to love them, and help connect them to our Vacation Bible School program, for example.

In this coming year, if Pasadena and the surrounding area have not moved closer to Jesus, then we haven't earned our keep here. We're making an effort to budget our money. Our expenses came in under budget. We came right in at our projected income. But it was estimated lower than 2008. And this year's projected income is budgeted about 8% lower than 2009.

So then we need to take a look at what we have and figure out how we can impact the community the best way with our resources. Pastor Glen does want to come before our congregation the last week of year and ask for \$25,000 so we can make it.

So this year, we need to move ourselves forward one step. We need to move others forward one step. If you thought of some things during this sermon, make a note and go home and challenge yourself. Have realistic goals. Don't think that you are going to lose 400 pounds this year or save a million dollars this year.

Be realistic. Take little steps, baby steps. Ask yourself what can I actually do this year that will help me be closer to Jesus a year from now, that will help me be more what God would want me to be to express his heart.

All of us can continue to improve in that. Talk to God about this. Ask him, "What do you want me to do? How do you want me to move one step and then another step closer to Jesus? And who around me do I need to help move that one step closer? Who needs some assistance as they take their step forward?"

God is inviting us to participate. God tells us that the environment he has put around us and the resources that he's made abundantly available to us are all good. There were times in the past that we thought that money was bad and this and that are bad. No, all of this is bad if it's misused. None of it is bad of itself. It's all good. It's all made by God.

God has made creation and is redeeming creation. One of the reasons we have the communion table here today is that it reminds us that Jesus became flesh. Jesus entered into his creation. Just think about that. That's like Bill Gates climbing inside a computer and becoming part of the program. He becomes part of Windows inside the computer and runs around and does all the things that the program is supposed to do.

That's just as crazy as Jesus, who created all things, to come down and become a part of that creation. That's just as crazy as having Bill Gates entering into a computer to make all the parts work. But that's what Jesus did.

Jesus believes in his creation and when he made it, he said in **Genesis 1** that it was, "**very good.**" And he wants to redeem not just us human beings but also wants to redeem the entire creation and to bring it into relationship with him. His broken body isn't just people. His broken body is his whole creation that's in turmoil. Jesus came to redeem all of that.

So we have an opportunity to come to the table and be reminded that all these things are of God if we use it properly. It all comes from him. It's a blessing from him. And he's redeeming it. He's transforming it. And he's using us to do that.

And may we, this coming year, be redeemers of all that's around us – our vehicles, our homes, our families, our money, and our environment. May we take care of what Jesus entered into and use it wisely.

So we have an opportunity to come and partake of the bread that reminds us of his physical nature. He was fully God but became fully human. He fully entered into the creation. But because the creation was broken by Adam's sin, he also had to bring forgiveness and spiritual redemption.

And so he shed his blood in order to make that possible. So let's partake of the bread and the cup.

**General Group Question:** Why is it so important to manage wisely all the resources God has given us?

**Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.**

1. What are some of the benefits of getting out of debt?
2. What age is it best to start saving for retirement? Why?
3. How does God want us to treat the environment? What do you base your answer on?
4. How should we consider our present sufferings (Romans 8:18)?
5. Why is the creation subject to frustration? How and when will it be redeemed?
6. What are the children of God waiting for (Romans 8:23)?
7. What is the temporary draft of our theme for 2010?
8. How would you fulfill or carry out this theme in your own life and in the people you know?
9. What is New Hope's responsibility in fulfilling our theme for 2010?