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**What do we really own?**

*‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’*

**--Job:1:21**

There’s the old joke about the nosy neighbor attending a rich woman’s funeral. As he and another mourner were peering into the coffin, he asked with an air of confidential conspiracy, “How much money did she leave?” The other mourner looked at him disdainfully and replied, “She left all of it, of course.”

Of course! As Job observes in the Bible passage above, we come into the world naked, and we leave the world the same way. Oh, we may be dressed in our best clothing on our way out, but we take it to the grave, not the afterlife.

The joke and Job reveal one of the most basic concepts of stewardship: We don’t really own anything. We may take possession of it for a period of time, but it’s not truly ours. We leave it for others.

Yet so much of our energy and time and life is spent trying to accumulate more and more – as if we were going to have it forever, as we ourselves were going to live forever. The danger is that we spend so much effort accumulating wealth that it diverts us from the things in life that are really important, namely loving the Lord our God with all our being and loving our neighbors as ourselves.

That’s the reason why the Bible consistently warns us about wealth. Jesus repeatedly points out the pitfalls. Money and possessions can turn us inward, stunting our growth and preventing us from being the people God created us to be.

The preventative medicine for this is generosity. The Bible counsels that tithing – giving away 10 percent of your income – is a good benchmark for faithful giving (although on several occasions Jesus told his disciples to give away all their possessions).

Giving 10 percent, or any amount substantial enough to be sacrificial, is a declaration that you are free from the power that money might have over you. Because however much money you can accumulate in life, you will be like the rich woman in the joke: You will leave it all.

*--Rob Blezard*

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