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**SERIES: REWRITING JESUS**

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**TITLE: Where Should We Invest? Pt. 2**

The single greatest investment you can make is in people. It's where you should be investing your time and talents: in people. Are you getting the idea? Open up your lives to those whom God has put in your path. Plan on and commit a section of time each day for people and encounters. That way, when God opens the doors, you have no excuse but to enter in.

So **we need to invest where we cannot lose**. Let's see what else Jesus taught for investment strategies in Matthew 6, verse 22 (NLT):

**22 “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. 23 But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!**

In verse 21, Jesus said, *where your treasure is, there your heart is also*. In other words, your investments – the things you spend your money and time on – are a reflection of your heart. It is the natural outflow of your true love, your true passion, your heart. You know a true golfer, because he's always golfing. His heart is golf. Well, Jesus here uses the analogy of the eye in place of the heart. Jesus says your eye is like a lamp, and when it's healthy or clear, your body is full of light. The word *healthy* here is the Greek word, *haplous*. Haplous can mean single, clear, and generous. So when your eyes are clear and are experiencing a single vision, you move effectively. Having a blurry and double vision is unhealthy. The NLT uses the word unhealthy, but a better translation would be bad or evil. It comes from the Greek word *poneros*, and this is often used in translating the Hebrew expression “evil eye,” which refers to someone who is greedy and stingy.

But here in verses 22 & 23, we find the next investment tip from Jesus: **We are called to invest in ourselves**. Where do I get this from these verses? Jesus is reminding us that we are to keep our hearts pure, and lives God-honoring. So I'm not telling you to go out and treat yourself to a shopping spree at DSW or Von Maur. I'm not suggesting splurging on that trip to Tahiti to see Tony Robbins Live. This is not self-help advice. Rather, this is Bible-help advice.

I believe Jesus wants us to be daily investing in ourselves, so we live a life that is obedient to God. Daily, we invest in keeping our hearts pure. If we can keep our eyes clean, our hearts pure, virtually everything else would fall into place. **Proverbs 4:23 “Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.”** Jesus said, **“A good person produces good**

**things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart” (Luke 6:45).**

Are you doing a good job keeping your heart, your life, your outlook, your world-view biblical? If not, then you’re not investing in yourself. Sure, you can invest in yourself in other ways. But remember, Paul said we can train or invest in the body, but that’s of little value. Train to be godly, because that will pay dividends in this life and in the life to come.

Now many of you may be thinking to yourself, “But Nat, you don’t know my past. I don’t deserve to be invested in. I’m not even sure I deserve to be used by God in my current state”. In fact, you may be thinking to yourself– “I decided to follow Jesus years ago, but I’ve done nothing with my faith. In fact, I’ve made a mess of it. I struggle with pornography or gambling, or alcohol or drugs. I’m a lousy steward of my money - I’m neck-deep in debt”.

Friend, if God can use me, I know He can use you. Some of you have heard my story before and know that I am grateful to God, because God uses imperfect, broken people. I won’t bore you with details, but my early twenties were much like many other twenty-somethings. It’s a time of seeing what the world is all about. I made a lot of poor decisions. And I hurt the people I loved most. So for a time, my life didn’t resemble much of a Christ-follower. But then – *whom God loves He disciplines*. And because of His gracious discipline, I was able to recalibrate and refocus. I began to invest in myself to be godly again.

**So invest in yourself to keep your heart pure in 3 ways.**

**First, pray.** Thank God that He has given you a new heart. Thank Him for loving you so much, to invest in you by sending Jesus for you. Then pray that God will give you a burning desire to know God and His Word. Pray for an investment coach. Pray for someone who will come alongside you, to hold you accountable in your pursuit of guarding your heart.

**Second, read.** According to the Barna Group, only 24% of millennials read the Bible once per week, and only 49% of elders read the Bible at least once a week. What’s the result? Well, for starters, 12% of American adults think Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife. And 50% of American adults think Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife. But how can we know how to think, believe, and act in the world, if we don’t read the Bible? It is our guidebook. Psalm 119:105 says, **“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.”**

How do you do this? You get back to the Bible. Our research here shows, if you can get into God’s Word four or more days per week, your life will dramatically show a difference. Does that mean you have to read a book of the Bible per day? A chapter of the Bible per day? A thought? We’ve discovered that even if you just get a few verses each day, for four days a week, you will see life change. If you’re still not sure what to do, try one of our reading plans at [backtothebible.org](http://backtothebible.org). We have many great reading plans from topics, such as fear, to a year through the Bible. We also have tracts answering life’s hardest questions. If you like to have an app that will send you daily content, check out our free app called goTandem. In that app, you can take a spiritual assessment for free, and daily it will send you biblical content, specific for your areas of struggle and your desired areas of growth. But we encourage you to invest in yourself with God’s Word, and allow your mind to be renewed, as Romans 12 says.

**The third way to keep your heart pure is to get some accountability.** Find someone who will either study the Bible with you or, at a bare minimum, find someone who will ask you on a weekly basis, “Have you read your Bible this week? What did you learn?” Accountability is often what takes people from talk to walk. My accountability partner takes me back to the time in my youth; he brought me back to godly living, and my life was changed because of it.

## **DISCUSSION:**

N: Let’s hear now from Cara and Arnie. What does having an accountability partner look like in your life Cara?

C: Well, you work out, Nat. How many people have the discipline to go work out on their own? It's hard. So we need to have someone that motivates us to get to the gym, and inspires us to do more reps, because you know, you have this little competition going. I think the same thing applies to our spiritual lives, and I think I recognized that early on. I actually know your wife, Nat, from Bible study - so I joined a Bible study group. I was hesitant to do it, but that was not the case. You know, you go - it forces you to go every Tuesday. You have work that you need to do, so I’m forced to get into the Word. I think we have that - that's too goTandem - why that's so good - because it's going to pop up at a certain time of day, and encourage you, move you closer to Jesus, more today than yesterday. I think that's an app that's an accountability partner. Very important.

N: Absolutely. Yeah. There's that old management principle, that what gets measured gets done. And that is so true in all areas of our lives, and having that external person to encourage us and motivate us just aids in that progression of accomplishing those goals. But for the record, whether you’re holding accountable, or you're being held accountable, it's a tough position on both sides, because you know, it could rub people the wrong way, and it could cause some issues in a relationship. But I will tell you, regardless of what side you're on, it does produce results. Arnie, I know you have benefited from this. How have you benefited from accountability?

A: Yeah, especially as a new believer, that was very helpful. I had a group of guys that I was accountable to, and they were accountable to me. Getting as a more mature believer and running a ministry, it's a little different. I still have friends that I'm accountable to. One of the things that I've tried to do, is it seems like I'm accountable to everybody. You know, the staff - I mean, if you have an open life, the kid - it's like, “Who aren't you accountable to?” And your wife, you know, if you don't have secrets, then you've got to tell your daughter. I mean, just all that stuff out there. It's so good to have a network of accountability. Our research has shown that accountability certainly helps, but it's not the end all, because people do - they're only going to tell you what they're comfortable with. [Right]. You have to be open to the feedback, and that's the thing. And the more open you are, the better feedback and the better accountability systems you're going to have.

N: Yeah. I think that's a real key point right there. I kind of sometimes put accountability in two different categories. One is organic: those things that kind of naturally transpire, naturally happen, and people can see that accountability naturally, but then there's more of a structured accountability. And I think that's what you're pointing to: those relationships that you know

you're not going to lie about, that you're not going to manipulate the situation. You're going to be honest and upright with them. And you've given them full permission to speak into your life in those areas, with freedom and with integrity. And I think those key differences help us, as we distinguish the people we're looking for as accountability partners.

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So, when it comes to making wise spiritual investments, Jesus says, invest where you cannot lose and invest in yourself, and now we'll move on in Matthew 6 to verse 24, where we'll uncover his last investment tip. Jesus says,

**<sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.**

This is a very familiar passage to believers and non-believers, but it may be one that has lost its meaning. Jesus said you cannot not *douleuo*, or be a slave to two masters. This is not the idea of an employee to an employer. You can work 2, 3, or more jobs, and do them well. There is no division of ability to serve them, unless you are scheduled all at the same time. That would be an issue. But instead, Jesus says, you cannot be a slave to 2 separate masters. It wasn't possible. As a slave in Jesus' day, you were under the beck and call of your sole master, 24/7.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 6:17-18, **“Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. <sup>18</sup> Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living.”** Paul referred to himself as a bondservant of Christ: One who willfully and fully was sold out to and committed to Christ. Now I want you to try walking in two opposite directions at the same time, and see how well it works for you. The reality is it won't, because it can't. The same is true for our relationship with God. Jesus is saying, you're either following Me, or you are following money, wealth, and possessions.

So Jesus' final investment tip is **Invest in loving God**. Friends, the human heart is wicked above all else. But when we become followers of Christ, we become born again with a new heart. We need to keep it functioning, and this can only happen if we fix our hearts, our vision on Jesus. We need to make Jesus our one true love. To use Jesus' description: *our treasure*. When we do this, it becomes a whole lot easier to keep our lives clean. We don't do it because we should; we do it because we love Him.

So, is Jesus your treasure? Are you hungry for Jesus? Do your thoughts center on the God of the Universe? Do your thoughts center on Jesus, your Savior? Or is your spouse your treasure? Are your kids your treasure? Is your work or your title your treasure? Is your hobby your treasure? Where your treasure is, there your heart is also.

I am convinced that if we can fall in love with Jesus – if we can fall in love with God - investing in God in all other matters of obedience and investing, will fall into place. There is no quick fix into falling madly in love with God. It is a process, but I'll steal the words of Francis Chan from the opening chapter of *Crazy Love*. Chan wrote, “What if I said, ‘Stop praying?’ What if I told you to stop talking at God for a while, but instead to take a long hard look at Him before you

Speak another word? Solomon warned us not to rush into God's presence with words. That's what fools do... The wise man comes to God without saying a word and stands in awe of Him... It may sound 'un-Christian' to say that on some mornings, I don't feel like loving God, or I just forget to. But I do... {So start} by standing in awed silence before a mighty, fearsome God, whose tremendous worth becomes even more apparent as we see our own puny selves in comparison."

When we remember God is God, and we are not, we will begin to love Him. When we remember that God is Holy, eternal, all-knowing, all-powerful, perfectly fair and just, three-in-one, and of course love, how can we not love Him?

So where do we go from here? What do we do now?

3 things I would encourage you to do today:

- 1) Pray. Who do you know who is far from God? Pray that God will put in you His love for them. And pray He will show you a way to invest in them.
- 2) Get back to the Bible. We're looking at a handful of Jesus' teaching, but there is so much more. Pick one of the Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John, and read one thought or section each day. As you read, answer the question: How did Jesus love people and invest in them?
- 3) Adjust your schedule. Identify times in your schedule over the next week, where you can spend time with non-Christians. If you don't have time available, adjust your schedule. Or simply be in a mindset to make adjustments as your schedule leads.

God calls us to invest where we cannot lose. Invest with a clear, single vision. And when we invest in people for God's glory, lives will be changed. We are called to scatter seeds and water, but in the end, it is God who saves. Let's invest where we cannot lose. Invest in ourselves in God's Word. And let's invest in loving God.

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N: Let's bring Arnie and Cara in and let me ask this question. Arnie, sometimes people get caught up in loving and believing a belief, rather than loving and believing God. Talk about that for a moment. What's the effect of that?

A: That's a great question. And in ministry, surprisingly enough, I see it all the time and it's really sad. You get these people that have dedicated their lives to the Lord, and all of that over the years - they all of a sudden become more loyal to the ministry, and lose focus on Jesus. And it's an interesting phenomenon, that they put the ministry over Christ. And I've seen it not once or twice - I see it so many times, that it's like, wow - I mean, I love Back to the Bible, and I love our equestrian ministry, but I could never put it above Christ. And I think partially, it's because I've seen so many examples of people, where they will put the ministry ahead, and then something obviously bad comes, whether it's immoral and they just overlook it, and then something else comes and it's "Oh no, no, no". So yes, it happens all the time. And it's something I think Satan will use anything to trip you up, even the ministry that you're involved with.

N: And I think you're right; I think that does happen a lot. I'm just curious - you know, we're really talking about spiritual discipline there. What are you doing to keep the main thing the main thing?

A: I think it's partially my prayer life. I mean, I am focused on, I have this crazy goal, of trying to move closer to Jesus every day, and trying my best. You know my prayer: not to be burned out, keep me in the front lines. So I'm very, very intentional about what I do, what I focus on. And that seems to help me quite a bit.

N: Cara, if someone should come to you and say that their relationship with God has grown stale, what advice would you give them?

C: Well, I'd ask them first and foremost, how often they were in the Word of God. So I wouldn't describe it as going stale for me, but I've definitely been in that desert, where I'm not feeling anything, so I can relate to that. The best advice that I could give is to get in the Word and worship music really worked for me. You know, falling, you know, like Arnie says, never lose sight of Christ. So my first love, He's my first love. And to just go back and fall in love with Him all over again. I would say even when you're not feeling anything, it doesn't last, and your feelings don't make it any less true. So the closest I've ever felt to God is in a trial. And I know this COVID thing has challenged me in ways, so I'm reminded then that God's in control, and I'm learning about my own issues in that, and for ways to grow in that. When I was in that space, I actually finally confessed it to a friend of mine that's a strong Christian woman, and coincidentally, she was experiencing the same thing. She was maybe two months behind me. So we kind of dug each other out of that together. I don't want to be in a trial though. So that was always my thing too. Because I was like, Lord, how can I feel you more? And then I was scared that the answer might be getting hit by a bus. But that's not good theology. That's just my brain working things out. But you've got to stay in the Word, because you will get out of it; just stay in the Word.

N: Well, what you're really describing is, just stay in relationship, right? I mean, you know, for those of us who are married, or just a friendship in general, guess what? If you don't call your friend very often, and don't engage with them, the friendship's going to feel distant, and you're going to feel almost stuck. And in fact, that's what I would describe it as: being spiritually stuck. And it seems like that's the number one question I deal with online with listeners, and people who are engaged through our app is: I feel stuck. I feel distant. I feel like God doesn't hear what's wrong with me. There is no pat answer for it. But I do think that your point is right on the money, that we need to engage with God through His Word, because that is His primary way of speaking to us today. And at the end of the day, it's all about the relationship. Could each of you give us an example of how you've carved out time to spend with non-Christians, and how does this happen?

C: I would say it's not planned time for me, because they're souls, not projects. Right? I meet people. I like them. I'll hang out with them, no matter what they believe, unless they're a sociopath or something - I don't want a whole lot to do with them - but I do pray for encounters

with nonbelievers. And I also pray when I meet someone new, that God gives me words that are needed for that moment. But mostly I just be me. I've got all types of people in my life. I would say that if you have to be the type of person that would plan those encounters, that you're genuinely motivated to lead people to Christ, I don't see anything wrong with that though. [Right]. I just think, don't be a weirdo though. Don't be a weirdo, be you. Don't "every Tuesday, I'm going to go hang out and schedule some time with some non-believers". I just don't think that sounds very genuine maybe.

N: Come on, that's what I was about to suggest actually, [Really?] Hey, from 12 to four, I'm going to work at a coffee shop, and in fact, Arnie knows this - that's what I did before COVID hit. I would spend certain days at a coffee shop, one - to work - but two - to create margin in my life for encounters that I never saw coming, and amazing how often it happened.

C: Well, I hang out with a lot of heathens though, Nat. So I don't have to go to the coffee shop, I guess. [Well, they're just attracted to you.] They are attracted to me; Me and losers - what's that saying? - losers love losers.

N: Right? Oh, that's funny. I think for some people though, when they're not like you or I, where we are naturally, I guess, inclined towards outreach, and for creating margin, they may have to start to put time down in their schedule for those encounters, you know. But there are those people who very much, it's just like, "Hey", when someone comes knocking at the door, or when the stray dog comes up, they just say, "Hey, I don't care what I was doing. I'm here for you." And that's a beautiful thing. But for a lot of us, when we're regimented by time - we're very American - scheduling it may be the first step in creating margin for people who are far from God.

C: A lot of people right now getting in Door Dash or Uber Eats or whatever - delivering meals one day a week would be a good way to do it.

N: Well, I mean, honestly, the gym's another great place. You schedule, "Hey, I'm going to give an hour and a half to the gym," and I will tell you, if you pray to God, "God give me eyes to see and ears to hear those around me, who need to have a touch from You," they will be there. I've had people just tap me on the shoulder while I'm doing the treadmill. And they'll say, "Hey, I was noticing, you know, you were listening to something in the music, and you've got a smile on your face. What are you listening to that makes you so happy?" And you can say, "Oh well, I'm actually listening to this." You know, so it's amazing what God will do when we, again, pause and are open to people, even in the most routine and scheduled ways. But I don't think again, it's a one size fits all. It's rather what's natural for you. And if you are out of rhythm in making time for people, you may have to start with scheduling something. What about you, Arnie?

A: I think what you guys are saying is very true. I mean, I'm not going to go out and join a bowling league. For me, it's more, God's bringing people to my doorstep every day. So I'm just talking, "Hey, stupid" - I'm talking to myself, you know - "Look around - who has God brought to you today?" So it's being intentionally focused on what God is doing in your life today.